

EDUCATORS SPEAK OUT!

NEA-NM LEGISLATIVE FUNDING PRIORITIES 2022



TAMMIE YAZZIE

EDUCATOR AT JUDY NELSON ELEMENTARY
CENTRAL CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT

NEA FOUNDATION AWARDS FOR TEACHING
EXCELLENCE 2021 RECIPIENT

EDUCATOR WAGES

- Pass a 10% across-the-board wage increase for educators
- Mandate a \$15 minimum wage for all public school employees
- Fully fund the statutorily required increase to Statewide Teacher Licensure levels to \$45,000 for Level One, \$55,000 for Level Two, and, \$65,000 for Level Three
- Fund a residency model program for new educators at \$35,000 per participant per year

HEALTHCARE

- Require districts to pay a minimum of 80% health insurance premium per paycheck to an employee's maximum payment of 20%
- Provide sufficient funds to ensure the long-term solvency of the New Mexico Retiree Health Care Authority (NMRHCA)

PLANNING TIME

- Guarantee educators adequate paid time to plan lessons, work collaboratively to improve professional practice, and assess and meet the needs of students and families.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

- Fully fund a statewide rollout of the Community Schools strategy for all high-poverty schools
- Support Community Schools with much-needed technical assistance and professional development

CLASS SIZE & ADEQUATE STAFFING

- Restore funding for sufficient staff, including highly qualified teachers and support service professionals
- Statutorily prohibit blanket class size waivers and obfuscatory class size averaging loopholes

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- Approve the constitutional amendment providing for additional annual distributions of the permanent school fund for underfunded early childhood education programs, K-12 programs for at-risk students, ELTP, and public school educator compensation

EDUCATOR WAGES



NEA-NM asserts the right of all people to earn a living wage, and public school employees are no exception. We demand the state take action to end our state's acute teacher shortage by implementing an across-the-board 10% wage increase and \$15 minimum wage for all public-school employees. The state must also fully fund the statutorily required increase to Statewide Teacher Licensure levels to \$45,000 for Level One, \$55,000 for Level Two, and, \$65,000 for Level Three and fund a residency model program for new educators at \$35,000 per participant per year.

"Many educators have two to three jobs to supplement their income. Educators that are parents do not have the necessary time to assist their own children with their homework or spend quality time with them because they are having to work jobs other than that with the district. Many education employees even sell their plasma to make ends meet."

BACKGROUND

In the 2021 New Mexico Educator Vacancy Report, there were a total of 1,727 educator vacancies across the state. These vacancies exist in virtually all subjects, grade levels, and regions of our state, constituting a shortage that is sufficiently acute to be described as a crisis. A stopgap measure which has been pursued to solve this issue is "Alternative Licensure," whereby adults with any college degree can become teachers without undergoing much needed professional preparation prior to entering the classroom. As of 2019, 12% of all teachers in the state, more than half of all new teacher hires, were alternative licensure teachers. Unfortunately, most of these prospective teachers do not teach beyond a year or two, with only 72 of 2,726 alternative licensure teachers receiving permanent licensure in 2018-2019, a 2.6% success rate.

The lack of qualified educators in New Mexico can be attributed in large part to the lack of competitive compensation for those in the education profession. According to a report published by the Economic Policy Institute, in 2019 (the most recent year for which there is data) public school teachers in the U.S. earned on average about 20% less weekly than nonteacher college graduates. New Mexico has the third highest teacher wage penalty in the country, with public school teachers earning nearly 30% less than nonteacher college graduates. When we consider that, according to a recent RAND survey, teachers are almost twice as likely as other employed adults to experience "frequent" job-related stress and almost three times more likely to experience depressive symptoms, we start to understand why many are leaving the education profession.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated many of the factors pushing educators, especially those early in their careers or near retirement, out of the profession. An nationwide survey of NEA members found that 32% of respondents had plans to leave the profession earlier than they anticipated as a result of the pandemic. This means an even greater crisis is looming on the horizon if swift action is not taken. In addition to raising educator wages, which research shows increases retention rates considerably, numerous rigorous studies suggest that funding a state-sanctioned teacher residency program would play a vital role in mitigating the teacher shortage crisis by bringing greater gender and racial diversity into the teaching profession, increasing retention rates for new educators, and ensuring teacher preparedness and effectiveness.

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[NEA Professional Pay Resources](#)

[TAKE ACTION ON WAGES!](#)



HEALTHCARE

We at NEA-NM believe that health is a universal human right, and that a universal single-payer healthcare system is the best way to end needless suffering and create a just society. As we continue to fight for the right of every American to access affordable, high-quality healthcare, we call on the legislature to ensure that educators, as state employees and frontline workers during the pandemic, can afford healthcare for themselves and their families by requiring districts to pay a minimum of 80% health insurance premium per paycheck to an employee's maximum payment of 20%.

“There have been many years that we educators have had our income reduced when insurance costs went up. There are also many staff that do not have health insurance through the schools because of the high cost. I have a friend that has no health insurance at all because it costs too much, and they have to decide when they need to go to the doctor by how severe they think they are sick...”

BACKGROUND

The issue of healthcare takes on new weight in the context of the ongoing pandemic: educators, the majority of whom are vaccinated, are nonetheless required on a daily basis to work closely with the largely unvaccinated student body. Already, numerous outbreaks have forced recently reopened schools in New Mexico to return to remote learning, and the Delta variant is changing what we thought we knew about the protections offered by masks, social distancing, and even vaccines. Through it all, educators have continued to go above and beyond to educate and support students. Despite this, many educators fear that, faced with rising health insurance premiums, expensive copays, and declining benefits, if they or someone in their family falls ill they will not be able to afford life-saving care. Is it possible to claim that New Mexico values the work of educators when the state does not take the necessary steps to ensure their health and wellbeing?

In recent years, loudly publicized wage increases for educators from the state have barely kept up with cost of living increases and with the cost of rising health insurance premiums. In 2019, the New Mexico Public Schools Insurance Authority, which insures many educators and their families statewide, increased insurance premiums for its medical and dental plans by 3.1 - 5.9% mere months after educators were given 6% wage increases. Accompanying this, rapidly inflating prescription drug and health service costs have resulted in educators paying more out-of-pocket for the same level of care. In addition, skyrocketing COVID-19 hospitalization costs will add to the burden borne by educators in the coming years.



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Retired and retiring educators have also struggled to receive adequate coverage under the New Mexico Retiree Health Care Authority. The NMRHCA was not a pre-funded benefits program at its creation and, in an effort to cope with lack of funding, has required retirees be at least 55 years of age and have provided 25 years of service before accessing subsidized health insurance benefits.

The critical link between educator mental and physical wellbeing and student outcomes has been well established: when educators are happy and healthy they are better at their jobs, less likely to experience "burnout," and more likely to remain in the education profession. While recent efforts to improve educator wellbeing have largely focused on a teacher's responsibility for self-care, this does not address the root causes of stress and illness in the profession nor acknowledge the role that access to quality preventative care plays in staying well.

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[NEA Health Benefits & Policy Resources](#)

TAKE ACTION ON HEALTHCARE!



PLANNING TIME

All educators must have adequate planning time to meet the needs of students living in poverty, students with disabilities and students learning English as a second language. Educators need time to meet with students and parents, analyze student needs, and respond with targeted lesson plans and appropriate supports. Educators also need time to work collaboratively, observing one another's classes, planning and learning together, and developing high-quality curricula and best practices.

BACKGROUND

In 2021, for the fifth year in a row, the Annie E. Casey Foundation ranked New Mexico 50th in the nation for education, and 49th in the nation for overall child well-being. 25% of children in our state live in poverty – one of the highest rates in the country. Child poverty is shown to have long-lasting negative effects on child development and educational outcomes. Furthermore, poverty affects some students more than others. Even in our diverse state, child poverty rates are significantly higher for Hispanic (20%) and Native American children (29.4%) than for White children (7.5%). High child poverty for these groups translates into markedly lower reading and math proficiency, lower graduation rates, and higher prevalence of chronic absenteeism (truancy). To meet the varied needs of our state's diverse student body, it is imperative that educators have additional non-teaching time built into their work day to learn about their students, to contact student families, develop targeted, differentiated lesson plans, and work collaboratively with other educators to improve their craft and provide support for struggling students.

Numerous studies of high-performing education systems across the globe show a link between ample paid non-teaching/planning time and improved educator effectiveness and student success. In these countries, educators spend only 30% to 60% of their total working time delivering instruction, compared to 80% or more in the United States. This means that educators in these countries have adequate time (as much as 25 hours per week) to work with colleagues on preparing and analyzing lessons, developing and evaluating assessments, observing other classrooms, and meeting with students and parents.

While some effort has been made in recent years to implement professional learning communities and other collaborative professional practice strategies in New Mexico, these efforts often fall short of expectations because they merely add an obligation to educators' already packed schedules.



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To cultivate a culture of professional learning, we must address the root causes of the teacher shortage and reduce the workload of educators, not just to decrease stress levels and mitigate teacher burnout, but also to create the time and space for continuous improvement and targeted student support.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further laid bare the need for adequate planning time for educators, especially those working with underserved student populations coping with poverty, lack of technology and other resources, and other out-of-school barriers to education. The reopening of schools requires adhering to physical distancing requirements, accommodating at-risk individuals, altering the school day, staggering schedules, and providing distance learning to students who are quarantining or whose families choose not to return to in-person classes. All this directly impacts workload. More must be done to enshrine adequate professional learning time into the law and give educators the time they need to do their jobs successfully.

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[NEA Teacher Professional Growth Resources](#)

[NEA COVID-19 and Educator Workload Resources](#)

[TAKE ACTION ON PLANNING TIME!](#)

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



Our schools and classrooms are not set up to ensure educators can meet the needs of students and families. Many of our communities are struggling from historic marginalization, families often feel disconnected from our education system, and many of our students do not have their basic needs met and are struggling with mental and physical health issues. Community Schools are a vehicle for change that offer an opportunity for educators to get what they need for their classrooms and their worksites. We need sustainable recurring funding to make the community school strategy accessible to all schools in our state and a core and permanent part of how our schools operate.

“Community partners and family engagement in schools enriches the educational experience for students. We all need to feel like we belong and are part of a bigger circle of humanity. Bringing more basic needs to students frees up educators to directly target academic concerns with proficiency in subject areas such as math and reading. Also, Community Schools provide enrichment possibilities (guest presenters, field trips, supplies, materials) that don’t exist in most school budgets.”

BACKGROUND

The Community School strategy is “a research-based strategy for mitigating the educational disadvantages associated with poverty and for improving students’ attendance, behavior, and achievement by making schools the hub of community resources.” Community Schools are built with four pillars: integrated health and social supports, expanded learning time and opportunities, strong family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and practice. These pillars are planned and managed by a full-time, site-based Community School Coordinator, who identifies the needs and assets in the school community and collaborates with the school leadership team, community partners, students, educators, and families to bring about grassroots change.

When well-implemented and fully funded, Community Schools have been shown to “lead to improvement in student and school outcomes and contribute to meeting the educational needs of low-achieving students in high poverty schools.” A cost-benefit study conducted in Community Schools in Albuquerque found a \$7.11 return on investment for every \$1 spent on the cost of a Community School Coordinator. Similar studies in other states have found returns on investment as high as \$15 for every \$1 invested in Community Schools, demonstrating that the strategy not only works, but that it is also more cost-effective than many other interventions.

While our state has come some way toward adopting the Community Schools strategy, efforts thus far have been piecemeal and inadequate.

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The Community Schools Act was passed by the state legislature in 2013 and was updated in 2019 to appoint a New Mexico Coalition for Community Schools and provide \$2 million in grant funding to be administered by the NM Public Education Department. Funding was doubled in 2020 to \$4 million, however this still falls far short of the amount needed to ensure that all high-poverty schools in the state can implement the strategy. In addition, the Legislature has not allocated any funding to providing the technical assistance and professional development that is needed to ensure state-funded implementation is high-quality and sustainable.

Despite this, Community Schools in New Mexico have proven their resilience and effectiveness even in dire circumstances. In the aftermath of the Yazzie/Martinez lawsuit, Community Schools demonstrated how the strategy excels at closing educational opportunity gaps faced by at-risk students, promoting culturally and linguistically responsive practices that meet the need of our state's diverse student body, and re-engaging communities that were alienated from the education system by decades of social and racial injustice. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, too, Community Schools have shown themselves to be uniquely poised to respond rapidly to crises by leveraging strong family and community engagement to provide economic, social, and health services to students and families in need. Community Schools are the future of education in New Mexico and across the country, and it's time that we fully fund that future.

LEARN MORE

[NEA Community School Resources](#)

[TAKE ACTION ON COMMUNITY
SCHOOLS!](#)

CLASS SIZE & ADEQUATE STAFFING



We know educators are more able to meet the needs of their students when they can provide more individualized attention with smaller class sizes. The legislature must restore funding for sufficient staff, including highly qualified teachers and support service professionals, to meet all students' needs. It is also necessary to statutorily prohibit blanket class size waivers and class size averaging that shorts the students time with educators.

“When I saw my school’s class size survey, I found that they counted the secretaries as teachers and the student aides they had as their classes. Since that was a one-on-one situation, it really skewed the class size counts. I discovered this after seeing that they had our school at a teacher-student ratio of 1:18. A better judge of class size is to see how many students attend a class of thirty or more throughout the day. When this was done, the same school showed that more than 90% of the students attended at least one class of thirty or more throughout the day.”

BACKGROUND

According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, the average class size across primary and secondary grades in New Mexico was approximately 20 students in 2017-2018. State law puts average limits of 22 students per class for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades; 24 students per class for 4th, 5th, and 6th grades; and 27 students per class for 7th through 12th grades . However, in recent years use and abuse of class size waivers and misleading class size averaging, as well as an overreliance on inexperienced teachers and “permanent substitutes,” have obfuscated the true class load of educators, which those on the ground are telling us is only getting worse as a result of the teacher shortage. The mix of inexperience and permanent, rotating, and nonexistent substitutes creates stress on educators and students and leads to burn out and exodus from the classroom. Experienced educators have to teach additional classes when no teacher is available. In addition, they must provide lesson plans for the 600 classrooms that don’t have a highly qualified teacher, and they have to supervise students in the halls, in the cafeteria, and on the playground.

Ample research demonstrates that educators and students benefit from the increase of individualized attention that accompanies smaller class sizes . We know that smaller class sizes have positive long-term effects on college and career readiness, health, and economic security, and that these benefits are even more pronounced for ethnic minority and poor students.

CLASS SIZE & ADEQUATE STAFFING



We know educators are more able to meet the needs of their students when they can provide more individualized attention with smaller class sizes. The legislature must restore funding for sufficient staff, including highly qualified teachers and support service professionals, to meet all students' needs. It is also necessary to statutorily prohibit blanket class size waivers and class size averaging that shorts the students time with educators.

We also know that students learn more at school and do better in life when their schools are fully staffed with high-quality professionals who can give them individualized support, respond to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, support their physical and mental health needs, and inspire joy, creativity, and critical thinking. New Mexico must therefore provide additional funding to recruit and retain educators and education support staff who give students a well-rounded school experience. This, in turn, will reduce overall class sizes, assuage educator fatigue, improve the quality of student learning, and support the wellbeing of students at school and at home.

LEARN MORE

[NEA Class Size Reduction Policy Brief](#)

[TAKE ACTION ON CLASS SIZE!](#)

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



All students should have access to successful programs that close educational opportunity gaps, including universal pre-K and other early childhood programs that are culturally and linguistically responsive, developmentally appropriate, and inclusive of students with disabilities. NEA-NM supports the proposed constitutional amendment allocating additional funds from the Land Grant Permanent Fund to early childhood education, K-12 programs for at-risk students, and educator compensation.

BACKGROUND

Considerable research attests to the lifelong impact of early childhood education on everything from college graduation rates to health outcomes, and yet 55% of young children (ages 3-4) in New Mexico are not enrolled in school of any kind. In the landmark education equity lawsuit *Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico*, Judge Sarah Singleton ruled that our state has “violated the rights of at-risk students [children who come from economically disadvantaged homes, children who are English Language Learners, children who are Native American, and children with a disability] by failing to provide them with a uniform statewide system of free public schools sufficient for their education,” including by failing to provide them with programs and services such as quality Pre-K, K-3 Plus, extended learning, dual language, culturally and linguistically relevant education, and social services. The New Mexico Funding for Early Childhood Programs Amendment—which will go before voters in the November 2022 general election—will play a critical role in addressing the findings of this case by closing educational opportunity gaps that put students at a disadvantage from an early age, funding K-12 extended learning time opportunities and programs for at-risk students, and ensuring educators are adequately paid.

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[NEA Early Childhood Education Resources](#)

[Ballotpedia New Mexico Funding for Early Childhood Programs Amendment Summary](#)

TAKE ACTION ON ECE!

EDUCATORS SPEAK OUT!

NEA-NM
LEGISLATIVE FUNDING
PRIORITIES 2022



METHODOLOGY

The National Education Association of New Mexico has for 134 years sought to promote and advance the education profession, protect the rights and interests of our members, and secure an adequately funded and equitable public education system for all. Thousands of educators working across New Mexico responded to our 2022 Legislative Funding Survey, sharing their top legislative budget priorities for our state's education system. This is only the latest in a continuous series of efforts to capture and amplify the major concerns of New Mexico educators and promote policy that responds to the needs of our richly diverse and unique education workforce and student population. In this document we have identified six legislative funding priority areas that NEA-NM will push for aggressively in upcoming legislative sessions and in talks with education decision-makers. We have also highlighted bottlenecks in building out the educator ecosystem and supporting a diverse workforce, and have identified areas of shared accountability to move our state forward. NEA-NM remains more committed than ever to ensuring that the education profession is secure and sustainable and that our public education system is just and equitable.

TAKE ACTION!

- **SIGN AN ONLINE PETITION**
- **POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA**
- **ATTEND A MEETING AT YOUR SCHOOL WITH YOUR LOCAL ASSOCIATION**
- **HELP ORGANIZE A MEETING AT YOUR SCHOOL**
- **ATTEND A SCHOOL BOARD MEETING**
- **SPEAK AT A SCHOOL BOARD MEETING**
- **CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATOR BY PHONE OR EMAIL**
- **ATTEND A GROUP MEETING WITH YOUR LOCAL LEGISLATOR**
- **ATTEND A RALLY/MARCH IN SANTA FE WITH OTHER EDUCATORS, PARENTS, STUDENTS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

EDUCATORS SPEAK OUT!

NEA-NM LEGISLATIVE FUNDING PRIORITIES 2022



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