

# New Mexico Graduation Equity Initiative

In partnership with the New Mexico Public Education Department, Future Focused Education is working to create new graduation pathways that offer students a more expansive learning and assessment system that celebrates and honors their cultural and linguistic strengths, while providing feedback and other engaging opportunities—allowing students to take ownership of their learning, build strong identities, and see a rich future ahead.

## NMGEI’s Vertical Engagement Strategy:

<b>Students</b>	Youth Participatory Action Research Project, paid interns, uplifting student voice and experience with assessment through community-based research; Interviews with New Mexican youth
<b>Educators</b>	Educator Community of Practice, paid teacher-leaders engaged in designing professional development resources and tools to support educators
<b>Community Members</b>	Prototyping, empathy interviews and focus groups; testing tools and strategies for graduate profile development and community engagement
<b>District and School Leaders</b>	Community of Practice, years-long community of learning to understand how to develop and implement graduate profiles and capstones
<b>NM Public Education Department</b>	Creating a Narrative Shift, capstones are an equitable assessment for all and this is not a top-down approach to assessment; instead, identifying where capstone assessments intersect with the strategic plan and ongoing work

## Schools in the Innovative Assessment Community of Practice:

- ACE Leadership High School (Albuquerque)
- Amy Biehl High School (Albuquerque)
- Aztec Public Schools
- Bélen High School
- Bloomfield School District
- Central Consolidated District
- Chama Schools
- Cuba ISD
- Deming Public Schools
- Dora Consolidated Schools
- Farmington Municipal Schools
- Gadsden ISD
- Goddard High School (Roswell)
- Grants High School
- Health Leadership High School (Albuquerque)
- Infinity High School (Bélen)
- La Academia de Esperanza Charter (Albuquerque)
- Las Cruces Public Schools
- Los Lunas Public Schools
- MASTERS Program (Santa Fe)
- McCurdy Charter School (Española)
- NACA Inspired Schools (Albuquerque)
- Rio Rancho Public Schools
- Roswell Public Schools
- Santa Fe Public Schools
- Siembra Leadership High School (Albuquerque)
- South Valley Academy (Albuquerque)
- Tech Leadership High School (Albuquerque)
- Vista Grande HS (Taos)
- Zuni Public Schools

Click [here](#) to read more about it.

## What is a Capstone?

- Of equal merit and value to the SAT
- Developed from bottom up, not top down
- Equity response to the Yazzie-Martinez lawsuit

The New Mexico Graduation Equity Initiative defines capstones as demonstrations of competency for graduation. A capstone is a months-long project rooted in authentic contexts and building on local assets and culture. Students engage in active, self-directed, and community-based learning experiences to produce a body of work that teachers periodically assess for evidence of competence. Capstones result in public exhibitions of learning to school, family, and community.

## Why Do Capstones Matter?

- **Retention:** Capstones will retain students in school by giving them meaningful experiences that give them a chance to apply their learning in real life scenarios and help identify what they want to do in their future.
- **Evidence of Learning:** Capstones give communities the evidence that students have the skills and knowledge described in graduate profiles which are a reflection of a communities hope for the future.
- **College and Career:** Students build the skills they will need to be successful in college or a career (finishing what you start, communicating, collaborating, etc.)
- **Grow Your Own:** Students appreciate the local wisdom in their own community and give employers and community organizations a chance to grow their own talent.
- **Equity:** Focusing on a student's language, culture and values and appreciating who they are and where they come from is a remedy to the concerns raised in Martinez-Yazzie.

## What is a Graduate Profile?

Graduate profiles articulate a vision for the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students need to attain to be successful after graduation by valuing and engaging with local wisdom. Profiles can be used as a tool or guide to “plan with the end in mind” to ensure that school and district efforts contribute to the vision for student success, represented by the graduate profile.

## Hear directly from New Mexican Capstone Educators

- [Capstones Better Prepare Native Students for College and Careers](#) By Miguel S. Maizano | Zuni High School, Senior Honors Project Teacher
- [Capstones Are Not Harder to Grade. Here's Why. Learning Is Easier to Assess When Tied to Real-World Skills](#) By Ronnie Reynolds | Senior Capstone Director, Siembra Leadership High School

- [Capstones Are the Cure for Teacher Burnout](#) By Kristen LaVolpa | Educational Consultant

**Other related readings from New Mexican educators:**

- [What It Looks Like When Classrooms Are Truly Embedded in Community](#) By Abby Nayra and Cheryl Carreon | Las Cruces CommunityShare
- [Essential For Learning, Essential For Life: How Social and Emotional Learning Can Transform Our Schools and Communities](#) By Amy McConnell Franklin, Ph.D. | Founding Member, SEL4NM
- [Are Graduate Profiles a Fad? Or a Real Fix?](#) By Tony Monfiletto | Executive Director, Future Focused Education | February 27, 2020