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Educator Workforce: Supply and Demand

New Mexico’s lawmakers and education leaders have placed increased focus on filling classroom vacancies, while also increasing the quality of teachers in the classroom. Investing in quality teacher preparation and retention has been a particularly important objective to ensure teachers are both prepared, and supported, to meet the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse students of New Mexico. Recently, lawmakers have worked to increase educator salaries, protect take-home pay, support evidence-based teacher preparation models, invest in professional learning opportunities, and provide scholarships for diverse candidates’ teacher preparation.

While such investments are important to address educator supply, New Mexico continues to face challenges in recruiting high-quality teachers for every student. Quality of teaching was a focus of the rulings from the *Martinez-Yazzie* consolidated lawsuit. Among several [findings](#), the court ruled “highly effective teachers are key to improving proficiency and these teachers need to be allocated to schools that serve the most at-risk students.” The court also noted “the weight of the evidence [in the lawsuit] leads to the conclusion that the quality of teaching for at-risk students is inadequate.”

Defining Teacher Shortages

The term “teacher shortage” is often used to refer to an insufficient production of new teachers given the number of both student enrollments and teacher retirements. Under this narrow definition, a teacher shortage defined by educator preparation program output measured against a district or state’s overall teacher vacancy rate. However, applying this narrow definition leaves out a variety of factors including teacher attrition, teacher quality, educational program requirements, teacher preparation, specific hard-to-staff subject areas, geographic location, and the viability of teaching as a career. In [a 2019 research paper](#), researchers from the Learning Policy Institute provided policymakers with a more robust understanding of teacher shortages, defining a teacher shortage as “an inadequate quantity of qualified individuals willing to offer their services under prevailing wages and conditions.”

Key Takeaways

Assessing teacher supply and demand is complicated and states use a variety of approaches to understand the issue.

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When assessing demand, it is important to consider factors in addition to student enrollment numbers.

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When assessing supply, it is important to consider teacher supply *quality*.

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Teacher vacancies in New Mexico have decreased across the state, but high-need and hard-to-fill positions still remain a top priority.

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Applying this more expansive definition of teacher shortages provides space for a more complex understanding of teacher supply and demand. A traditional definition of demand would look only at the number of available job positions offered for a specific compensation. Similarly, a traditional definition of supply would look only at the number of qualified individuals to fill the available positions. However, in the teacher labor market, it is important to study and understand the many variables involved in measuring and understanding how vacancies are filled in the teaching profession.

Assessing Educator Supply and Demand

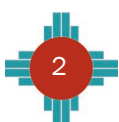
Assessing teacher supply and demand is complicated, and states across the country use a variety of approaches to understand their respective workforces. Supply and demand reports consider the major components that assess the teacher workforce. According to educational researchers, when imbalances in the supply and demand for teachers occur, school districts may adopt strategies that create suboptimal learning experiences for students. This can include filling teacher openings with long-term substitutes or underprepared alternatively licensed teachers.

Understanding Demand. The first component of the teacher labor market is teacher demand. Knowing how many teachers are needed is crucial to understanding labor market needs and thus ensuring every school community has access to a sufficient supply of well-qualified teachers. One of the biggest challenges in estimating demand is navigating the difference between [ideal demand and actual demand](#). *Ideal demand* requires defining the desired student-teacher ratio, geographic teacher distribution, course requirements, and program electives to determine the ideal number of teachers necessary. The second way to consider teacher demand is to look solely at the annual need for teachers to fill vacant positions at a school, otherwise known as *actual demand*. Policymakers should be aware of this distinction as often the teacher supply and demand conversation considers only open vacancies and student enrollment. To develop, sustain, and identify the needs of a high-quality workforce, however, it is important to consider ideal demand requirements. For example, if a high school in New Mexico experiences a student enrollment decline of 20 percent, this factor alone does not necessarily indicate the school should have an equivalent loss of teacher full-time equivalent (FTE) roles because the school still needs to meet course requirements for graduation regardless of the number of students.

Quantifying Demand. Approaches to quantifying demand in the teaching profession differs depending on whose asking. Annually, the U.S. Department of Education requires states to report shortage areas by specific grade, subject matter, and geographic areas to target federal support for teacher-specific incentives such as loan deferment, loan cancellation,

and scholarships. In New Mexico, the Educator Vacancy Report produced by the New Mexico State University Southwest Outreach Academic Research Evaluation & Policy Center (SOAR) uses publically available job postings to measure the potential shortage by quantifying statewide vacancies. This data source is cited throughout the state as the sole mechanism for quantifying teacher demand; while the report provides valuable insight into open positions, it is important to consider its limitations to provide all information needed to understand the complexity of teacher shortages. Other states quantify demand using metrics such as

Hidden shortages are said to exist when teaching is carried out by someone who is not qualified to teach the subject. It is often referred to as “out-of-field” teaching and is usually measured as the proportion of teachers teaching a subject in which they are not qualified.



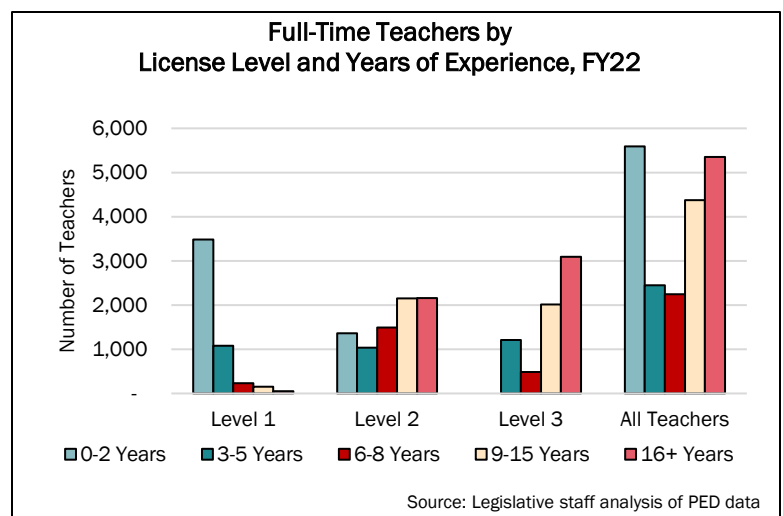
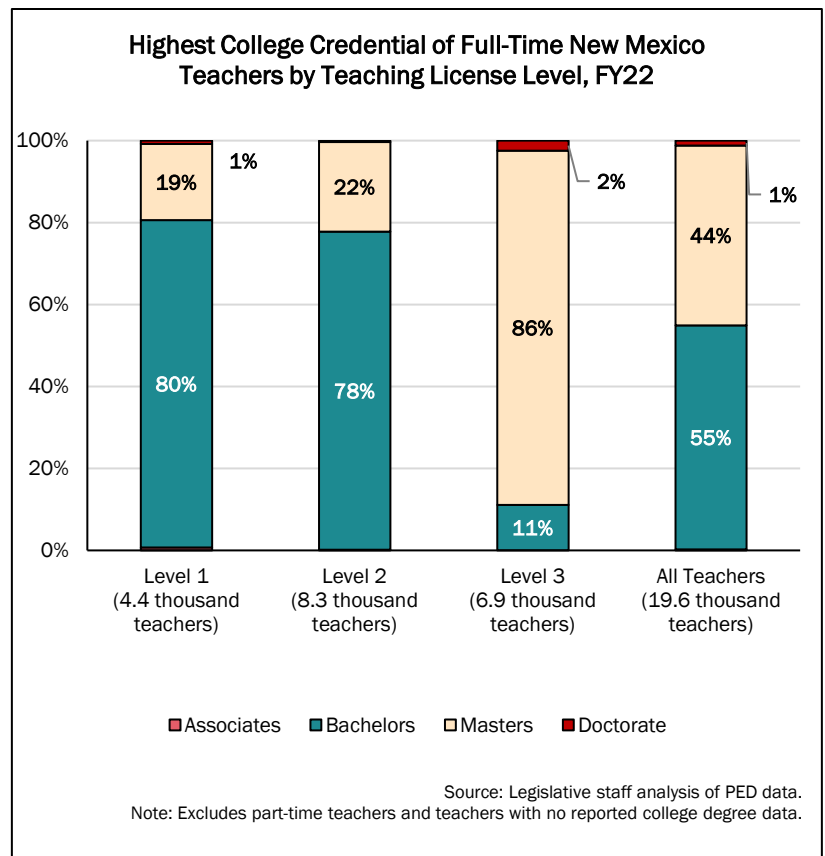
student enrollment, school district surveys of hard-to-staff positions, licensure data, retirement trends, curriculum requirements, elective options, and long-term substitute positions.

- **Student enrollment** determines how many teachers are needed.
- **Student-teacher ratios** are impacted by changes in: 1) Staffing patterns; 2) Class sizes; and 3) Program offerings affecting the relevant category of teachers.
- **Teachers leaving** the profession can be grouped in three different ways: 1) Retirement; 2) Preretirement exits; and 3) Educators moving to other districts or schools.

Understanding Supply: The second component of the teacher labor market is teacher supply. Knowing how many teachers are in the teacher pipeline is crucial to ensuring every school community has access to a sufficient supply of well-qualified teachers. To evaluate the current condition of teacher supply, academic research often examines two primary indicators: 1) The number of enrollees in teacher preparation programs; and 2) The number of completers. Similar to demand, there are several ways to go beyond this initial indicator of supply. Researchers may choose to also consider the total numbers of a licensed teacher workforce. For example, in New Mexico there are currently more individuals who hold valid New Mexico teacher’s licenses than the number of teachers currently in the classroom. By considering both new teacher candidates and licensed teachers who could reenter the workforce, policymakers can consider how policies influencing working conditions impact teacher supply. Finally, when analyzing teacher supply it is essential to consider teacher quality and policies ensuring a quality supply of teachers to meet demand.

Quantifying Supply: Numbers that define the supply of teachers at the beginning of the school year come from multiple sources:

- New entrants into the system;
- Former teachers reentering the system;

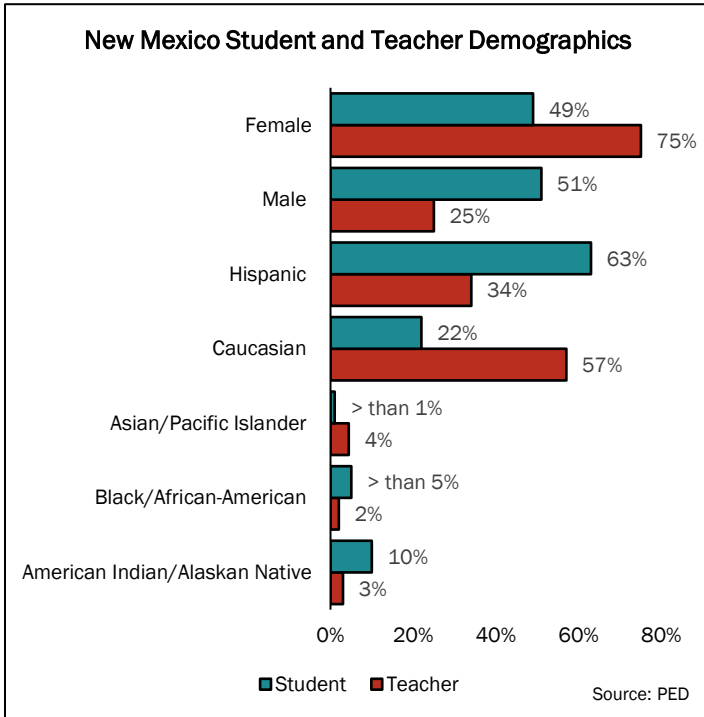


- Current teachers continuing from the last year to the current year; and
- Immigration of teachers from outside the system.

New Mexico's Teacher Workforce

A strong educator workforce is foundation to public education systems, yet reports indicate New Mexico faces challenges in staffing all schools with diverse, well-prepared educators who stay in the profession. Skillful educators with robust knowledge are the most important in-school influence on student learning, with the largest positive impact on the academic achievement of students of color and those from low-income families. This research is especially important to consider in New Mexico, where census data shows 77 percent of students are students of color and 24.7 percent of children live below the poverty line.

New Mexico's workforce largely consists of "veteran" teachers—defined as teachers holding either a level 2 or level 3 license. These level 2 and level 3 teachers comprise over 75 percent of



the total workforce in New Mexico. However, this distribution of teacher experience is not distributed equally across the state. In some school districts, level 1 teachers, or teachers with the least amount of experience, make up a larger portion of the school district workforce than the state average. An additional component to consider is the distribution of alternatively licensed level 1 teachers, who can join the workforce with less formal teacher preparation.

Studies show students from diverse backgrounds perform better on standardized tests, have improved attendance, and are suspended less frequently when they have at least one teacher that identifies as the same race or ethnic identity as the student. Nationally, more than half students in the U.S. are racially or ethnically diverse, compared with 80 percent of the teacher workforce identifying as white. New Mexico's teacher workforce also has gaps in representation. Statewide, 63 percent of students are Hispanic or Latino while only 34 percent of the teacher workforce identifies as the same. Similarly, only 3 percent of the teacher workforce is Native American while 10 percent of New Mexico students are Native American.

Historically, New Mexico has experienced sizeable shortages in certified teachers, specifically teachers certified in high-need subject areas. These existing challenges were exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the "great resignation." Many school and district leaders have noted increases in teacher burnout and pandemic-induced departures from teachers who may have otherwise remained in the profession. In response to these challenges, the Legislature has worked to strengthen New Mexico's educator workforce by raising teachers' salaries, investing in high-retention pathways into teaching, and increasing investments in principal and teacher professional development.

Current Reality of New Mexico’s Educator Workforce

During the 2021–2022 school year, analysis conducted by New Mexico State University indicated New Mexico’s schools had over 1,000 teacher vacancies. During the 2022 legislative session, the Legislature raised minimum teacher salaries by 10 thousand per licensure tier and appropriated funding for a 7 percent average pay raise for all school employees. Since these legislative actions were taken, the Public Education Department (PED) reports a decrease in teacher vacancies by over 300 positions. Evidence of decreased open teaching positions was further supported by the NMSU New Mexico Educator Vacancy Report—commonly known as “the SOAR Report”—which indicates 690 teacher vacancies, representing a 34 percent decrease over the 2021–2022 school year. Across the state, teacher vacancies continue to be a challenge in high-need subject areas, including mathematics, science, and special education. While using overall vacancy rates is not the most reliable measure of holistic teacher demand, it should be of great interest to policymakers to consider the vacancy rate of hard-to-staff positions that have gone unfilled for a significant amount of time, or the proportion of positions filled by underqualified teachers.

State Policy and Budget Considerations

As research continues to show the necessity of a highly qualified diverse educator workforce, it will be important for the Legislature to consider policy that aligns with recruiting a high quality educator workforce and reducing teacher attrition. While no single policy can address all components of teacher labor market, a comprehensive set of strategies that are focused on increasing the number of well-prepared and highly qualified candidates, directing candidates to high-need areas, and addressing teacher attrition is likely to positively influence the educator workforce. The Legislature has worked to strengthen New Mexico’s educator workforce including raising teachers’ salaries, investing in high-retention pathways into teaching, and increasing investments in principal and teacher professional development.

Stabilize funding for high-quality teacher preparation pathways. Teacher residency programs are a research-based strategy to recruit and retain high-quality teacher candidates with diverse backgrounds. Currently, the funding for residencies is nonrecurring, resulting in uncertainty about funding and creating a potential barrier to program expansion.

Relevant Budget Line Items:	Relevant Policy Considerations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher Residency Programs• Teacher Recruitment Efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For FY23, the Legislature appropriated \$15.5 million in one-time funding appropriated from the public education reform fund to support teacher residency programs. The Legislature could consider creating a recurring funding source.

Fund salary increases. For FY23, the Legislature appropriated \$381.6 million for increases to tier minimums for licensed teachers, increases in the minimum wage for school personnel, targeted compensation for hard-to-fill positions, and average increases in compensation for all school personnel. School districts have expressed increases in teacher minimum salaries have supported both teacher retention and teacher recruitment efforts. According to the SOAR report, while vacancies dropped 34 percent since school year 2021-2022, the state continues to face shortages in math, science, and special education. The Legislature could consider appropriating funding for targeted salary increases for hard-to-fill positions.

Relevant Budget Line Items:	Relevant Policy Considerations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted School Personnel Compensation Insurance (Benefits increase) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider continued targeted investments for hard-to-fill positions, including counselors, special education teachers, bilingual teachers, and social workers. Consider increasing the share of public school employee's health insurance premiums that are paid by their school district or charter school.

Increase funding to support teacher and principal professional development. National research finds teachers indicate a multitude of factors result in their leaving the profession, significant among them being pay and working conditions. Working conditions are important to consider when working to increase the supply of high-quality teachers. Teacher professional learning opportunities can provide a mechanism of support to positively shape a teacher's professional experience. Additionally, research indicates principals are a primary stakeholder in shaping a teacher's experience. Consequently, to improve the quality of both a teacher's working conditions and pedagogical practice, the Legislature could consider increasing funding available for professional learning for both teachers and principals.

Relevant Budget Line Items:	Relevant Policy Considerations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Professional Development Programs Principal Professional Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider providing funding for professional learning opportunities for both teachers and principals through the State Equalization Guarantee and below-the-line funding to the Public Education Department.

Uphold and revise current statute to provide annual teacher supply and demand data. Currently, there is no consistent report produced by a state agency on teacher supply and demand. Section 22-10A-19.2 NMSA 1978 requires PED to design a uniform educator accountability reporting system to measure and track teacher and administrator education candidates from pre-entry to post-graduation in order to provide teacher workforce supply and teacher preparation quality data. The department is currently working on providing this data to the Legislature. While the NMSU SOAR report provides important context to understand teacher vacancies at the time of the reports publishing, it does not provide the complete picture of New Mexico's educator workforce. The generation of timely data on the educator workforce could provide valuable information for targeted policy decisions.

Relevant Budget Line Items:	Relevant Policy Considerations:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider directing a study providing timely data on the educator workforce in New Mexico. Consider directing a design of a data system that monitors the total number and diversity of enrollees in teacher preparation programs, the quality of curriculum at teacher preparation programs, and follows teacher candidates post-graduation.

Continue funding for Grow Your Own Programs and Scholarships. National research indicates there are promising practices policymakers can implement to diversify the teaching workforce and support the recruitment and retention of a high-quality workforce. One practice is to address high-retention and supportive pathways into teaching, including funding scholarships for educators that underwrite a significant portion of educational costs. An additional consideration for supportive high-retention pathways into teaching is the development of Grow Your Own programs that recruit teacher candidates from nontraditional populations, including high school students and paraprofessionals. For FY23, the Legislature appropriated \$1 million for teacher

recruitment pilots and programs to improve the teacher workforce pipeline. The Legislature could consider future teacher workforce pipeline appropriations to continue these efforts.

Relevant Budget Line Items:	Relevant Policy Considerations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grow Your Own Programs• Teacher Recruitment Funding• Teacher Affordability Scholarship	