

In May we completed the first year of the New Mexico ECHO for Education project. This project was conceived and made possible by Dr. Elaine Perea who heads the College and Career Readiness Bureau (CCRB) at the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED). Dr. Perea evaluated graduation rates in New Mexico High Schools, which are the worst in the country. The NM high school 4-year graduation rate is 71%. Dr. Perea recognized that graduation rates among students that participate in classes and activities in Career Technical Education are above 86%.

Dr. Perea commissioned Dr. Michael Stanton to develop a Career Readiness Handbook for teachers and school Counselors and from this came the idea to use Project ECHO to train teachers and school counselors to provide career readiness courses and training in areas of New Mexico where resources are limited. Dr. Stanton is an educational consultant to the New Mexico Public Education Department, a former high school principal, and founder of the nex+Gen Academy in Albuquerque. The nex+Gen Academy is a project-based learning charter high school.

The NM ECHO for Education (NMEE) Network was inspired by work of ECHO partners in Wyoming and India who have successfully used the ECHO model in the field of education. The NMEE Network goal is to increase and advance opportunities for students to improve their personal pathways to college and careers.

This partnership between the NM PED and Project ECHO created a knowledge network of teacher leaders in fifteen of New Mexico's under resourced high schools. The project launched January 8th, 2018 with the expectation that participants in this inaugural virtual community of practice would implement what they learn in their classrooms and school communities and that this would help students and improve graduation rates.

The NMEE Network Hub was located at the ECHO Institute and was supported by Dr. Arora, Dr. Bruce Strumminger, Rachele Rochelle, Cynthia Olivas and Stephen Murillo. Education leaders around New Mexico participated in a weekly sixty-minute ECHO session. Many of these educators have shared that knowledge and expertise gained through the ECHO Network was satisfying to their professional careers and valuable to their students and their school communities.

Thirty-five subject matter experts from around the country provided the curriculum. These included local, regional, and nationally based experts with expertise in topics, programs and resources, felt to improve outcomes for students.

Classroom teacher leaders, counselors, special education teachers, and administrators from around the state participated weekly in the network. Case presentations included individual students or groups of students as well as system issues of interest to the spoke. Some of these system issues included career exploration and goal setting to better engage students in learning, school safety and violence, and how students in remote, isolated parts of New Mexico can better access resources and experiences to help them make more informed career choices.

Initial feedback is that Hub and Spoke participants have found the Network helpful and rewarding. One spoke described it as the best continuing education experience she has ever had. We are excited that through ongoing collaboration among Dr. Perea and the NM Public Education Department, Dr. Arora and Project ECHO, and Dr. Michael Stanton, the NM Network will be continuing this fall.