



PROFILE

A sense of urgency to lead future generations in a quest for social justice and social equality led Ms. Mandi Torrez to education following an eight-year, award-winning journalism career.

Torrez serves on her school leadership team, has been a head teacher and peer mentor, served on district curriculum committees and leads school efforts in celebrating diverse cultures. Torrez's first work with children was in college while volunteering at an after-school program for English Language Learners in a low-income housing community. It was her first look at the achievement gap, which eventually drew her back to working with children.

Torrez lives in Rio Rancho, N.M., with her husband and two daughters.

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MANDI TORREZ

New Mexico Teacher of the Year 2020

EDUCATION

Wheelock College, Boston, MA

2009 - 2011

Master of Science

Integrated Elementary and Special Education

University of Colorado, Boulder, CO

1998 - 2000

Bachelor of Science

Journalism

Dodge City Community College, Dodge City, KS

1996 - 1998

Associate of Arts

Mass Communication

- Phi Theta Kappa
- National JUCO Academic All-American, Softball
- Conquest Magazine Editor
- Kansas Associated Collegiate Press Nominee
Journalist of the Year 1998

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Bernalillo Public Schools, New Mexico

2011- present

Third Grade/Fourth Grade Classroom Teacher

Algodones Elementary

Placitas Elementary

- Leadership Team
- Head Teacher
- Peer Mentor
- SAT Chair
- District Math & ELA Curriculum Committees
- 2018-2019 BPS Teacher of the Year

Public Schools of Brookline, Massachusetts

2009 - 2011

Full-year Student Teacher

Special Education Paraprofessional

TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Education Areas of Focus

The Achievement Gap

- In 2019, Hispanic children in New Mexico scored 22 points lower than their white counterparts, according to the Nation's Report Card.
- In 2019, New Mexico students eligible for free and reduced lunch performed 28 points lower than their counterparts.
- According to the Nation's Report Card, the 2017 national achievement gaps between groups represent differences of roughly one-and-a-half years of normal academic progress.
- According to the National Center for Education Statistics, at grade 4, the White-Hispanic gap in 2017 (23 points) was not measurably different from the gap in 1992.

Rural Schools

- According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 39 percent of rural schools nationwide struggle to fill positions in every subject.
- Rural Hispanics, blacks, Native Americans and other nonwhite students graduate at lower rates than the national average, according to the Rural School and Community Trust. In some states, the proportion is even lower.

Teacher Retention

- Last year there were 644 teacher vacancies across New Mexico.
- In 2018, there was a 23 percent decline in teacher prep programs across the nation.
- In 2018-2019, New Mexico teacher prep programs had 97 fewer students complete a program and 47 fewer students admitted to a program.
- In 2018, New Mexico had a teacher attractiveness rating of 2.18 on a scale of 1-5.
- In 2018-2019, nearly 60 percent of students admitted to programs were seeking an alternative license, rather than going the traditional route in teacher training.
- In 2016, New Mexico had the second highest rate for teacher turnover in the nation.
- In 2017, a public survey by the American Teachers Federation found that teachers reported having poor mental health for 11 or more days per month at twice the rate of the general U.S. workforce.
- The 2017 ATF survey found that teachers' level of influence and control dropped significantly on policy decisions that directly impact their classroom, such as setting discipline policy, setting performance standards and deciding how resources are spent.
- Also in the 2017 ATF survey, educators and school staff said that they find their work "always" or "often" stressful 61 percent of the time, significantly higher than workers in the general population, who report that work is "always" or "often" stressful only 30 percent of the time.