

NEA-New Mexico

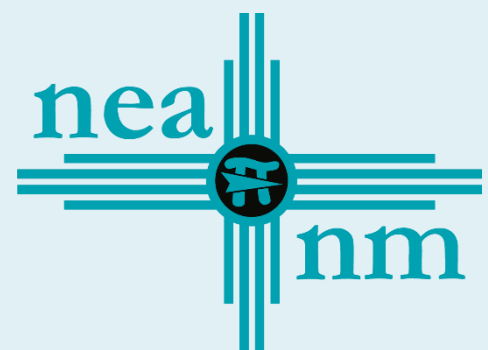
2021 LEGISLATIVE GOALS



2021

NEA-NM

Government Relations



NEA-NM 2021 Legislative Goals

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Are we up for this challenge?

As the ninety-eighth President of NEA-NM, I have the honor of representing thousands of educators across the state. I am a lifelong educator myself, with twenty-five years' experience teaching middle school Civics and American History in Las Cruces. I look forward to meeting and working with all of you during this 2021 Legislative Session.



Our education system has not been working for many of our students. It must be rebuilt on the core values of honoring our students' culture, language and diversity. We must end systems of discrimination and marginalization that do not allow all students to learn and perform to their full potential. We must work to make sure that in a minority- majority state, we do not try to standardize our students or their education in a way that ignores their unique attributes and challenges. We must begin to fully fund our schools.

Educators are at the core of the American promise. They do not just go to work every day; they answer a call to serve. Today, educators are the most trusted professionals in their field: They know their students by name, they know what their students need, and their input is essential to ensuring that all students reach their full potential and excel. As respected and valued professionals, educators must have a voice in all decisions affecting our public schools and in empowering the next generation of students to take their place in a diverse and interdependent world.

We face considerable challenges this session, with COVID-19 wreaking havoc in our families, our schools, and our economy. Without question, the pandemic has underscored vast differences in economic and educational opportunity. This inequity, when combined with persistent underfunding, has hurt our children. We. Must. Do. Better. Are we up for this challenge? The next generation is watching.

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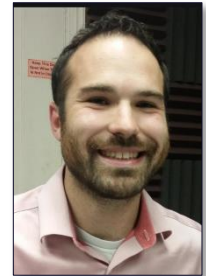
NEA Ed Votes, <https://educationvotes.nea.org/issues-and-actions/>

2021 NEA-NM's Lobbyist Team



In July, we were fortunate to hire Dr. Earl Wiman, as Executive Director of NEA-NM. Dr. Wiman brings a wealth of experience as a former classroom teacher, principal, to state President of the Tennessee Education Association, and Executive Officer with the NEA. When you see him, please welcome him to New Mexico.

David Greenberg is NEA-NM's Executive Director of the Center for Community Schools. He is the most recent addition to the team, and we are very confident that his national expertise in Community Schools will be a great asset for New Mexico's students as we work to create the schools our children deserve.



Steve Siañez is our NEA-NM Government Relations and Communication Director. Steve hails from Texas, California, and Mexico and adds an organizing and multilingual lens to our work. With an eye to racial and social justice, he is a valuable member of the team.

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Building a More Just and Equitable Public Education System

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. Throughout its long history, enacting legislation that reflects the needs and experiences of New Mexico's teachers (educators), students, and communities has been of the utmost importance in achieving these goals.

In the context of the current public health crisis, it is critical that the voice of educators be included in the decision-making processes. These decisions will determine health and safety in the workplace and shape the quality of education New Mexico's students can expect to receive for years to come. The COVID-19 crisis has revealed the stark inequity that continues to plague our public education system, while emphasizing the indispensable role schools and teachers play in our society. The pandemic has provided an opportunity to adopt innovative policies and recommit ourselves to public education. We ask that state lawmakers carefully consider the following Legislative Goals, which reflect the collective voice of thousands of educators across the state who are more invested in public education than ever before.

It is important to note that the categorization of these goals into themes is intended to facilitate reading, but does not reflect the truly interconnected nature of our work: all of these Legislative Goals work together synergistically to uplift the education profession and create a more just and equitable education system.

NEA-NM looks forward to collaborating with state legislators and the Governor in order to see these goals realized in the next legislative session and beyond.

A Sufficient and Equitable Education System

Support Community Schools

Community Schools meet the needs of diverse students and families by including them as full partners in decision-making and allow them to shape the programs and policies they wish to see in their schools. Community schools identify both the assets and needs in a school community and a continuous cycle of improvement science is used to address the identified needs through the hiring of an on-site coordinator who works within the school to bring about grassroots change. Rather than pursued as a below-the-line grant program receiving limited recurring State funding, the Community Schools model should be rolled out Statewide as part of an effective strategy to combat poverty, improve educational achievement, and achieve racial and social equity in New Mexico.

“All students have a basic right to a great public school. This is our vision of what great public schools need and should provide.”

Ensure Student Equity and Opportunity

Our education system must be rebuilt on core values of honoring our students’ well-being and ending systems of discrimination and marginalization that do not allow all students to learn and perform to their full potential. The State must deeply engage educators, students, families, and tribal leaders to shape education priorities. These priorities should emphasize increasing funding for educators in order to end the teacher shortage, increasing and maintaining appropriate support for students with priority needs, such as special education, gifted, and English Language Learners, and providing for more fine arts, physical education, music, and vocational programs taught by qualified licensed instructors. As a result of the current public health crisis, it has also become evident that quality internet access must be guaranteed for all students.

Early Childhood Education



All students should have access to successful programs that close educational opportunity gaps, including universal pre-K that is culturally and linguistically responsive to provide full-day options for 4-year old children and half-day options for 3-year old children. In addition, students with disabilities must be provided special education and ancillary services that meet individualized education plans and in the most appropriate and least restrictive classroom settings. Discipline of young children should be developmentally appropriate, inclusive and to the extent possible restorative (root-cause) in nature. In the context of COVID-19, this may mean allowing for remote schooling to continue for those students with special health considerations. Home visiting programs and other early childhood programs are also proven to help our students be fully ready to benefit from their K-12 schooling and should be expanded Statewide.

Extended Learning K-5 Plus

Educators believe in the power of extended learning for our students. Local affiliates, districts, parents and students must participate fully in the design, authorization, implementation, and evaluation of extended school and year programs. Authentic teacher-generated assessments should be used to measure student academic growth

and achievement. Laws and policies governing these programs must take into consideration the impact on the community and be in accordance with professional salaries and class size. These programs must be staffed by properly certificated/licensed employees. Employment in these programs must be on a voluntary basis. We believe the most powerful programs provide funding for classroom supplies, as well as money for experiential learning activities which go beyond textbook and/or computer seat time. Partnership with local nonprofit organizations also typically enhances program quality. Flexibility must be provided as to how individual school districts and individual schools within a district can best meet the needs of their communities, parents, and students.

“All schools should offer healthy meals, wellness centers, an adequate number of nurses, counselors and social workers, so that students and families have access to resources to overcome economic barriers.”

Providing Adequate High-Quality Health Care

Our Increase funding for school-based health care services, including physical, dental and mental health care. All New Mexico students should have full health care coverage.

Health and Wellness Resources That Promote Wellbeing

All schools should offer healthy meals, wellness centers, an adequate number of nurses, counselors and social workers, so that students and families have access to resources to overcome economic barriers.

Every New Mexico Student Will Learn in a Carbon-Neutral School

Develop and initiate funding for a plan to make every New Mexico school carbon-neutral. This program will simultaneously move our State toward increasing the flow of available funds to the classroom (by reducing the structural energy-related “fixed cost” within District and school budgets). This plan should be structured so that

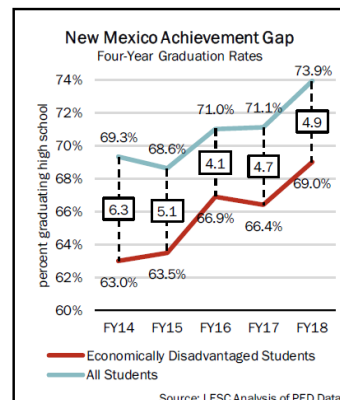
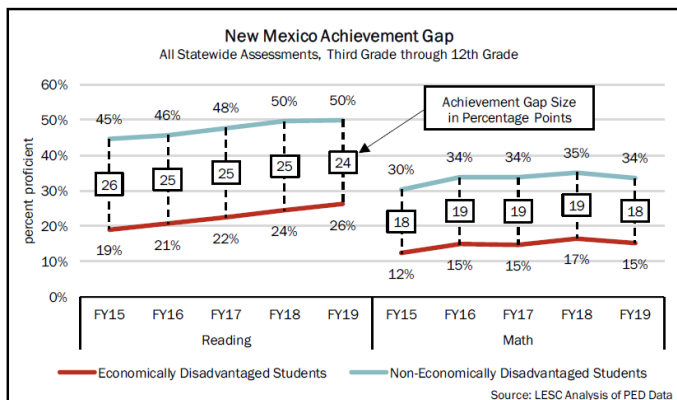
contractors work with the school staff to provide student opportunities for Career and Technical Education instruction and hands-on learning experiences for students (such as understanding the math, science, engineering, and policy behind the initiative). This program will also be a big step toward helping our State achieve its goals of being carbon neutral by 2045 and stimulate economic growth in every New Mexico community.

Legislation to Increase Student Success Must Address Poverty and Quality of Life for Students, Parents and the Community

This should include, but not be limited to, raising the minimum wage to a living wage based on community standards, thus, providing access to quality public early education and improving student health and well-being.



“The Community Schools model should be rolled out Statewide as part of an effective strategy to combat poverty, improve educational achievement, and achieve racial and social equity in New Mexico”.



Funding

Prioritize Education Funding to Guarantee Adequate Recurring Revenues



Over the last ten years, public school funding has been reduced as a percent of general fund expenditures. Every dollar spent through the failed strategy of tax breaks for the rich (households of \$250,000 + income) is a dollar taken from our students. Adopt a strategy to provide revenue for sufficient funding to meet student needs for every New Mexico student.

- Repeal the 2013 Corporate Tax Give-Away
- Restore Personal Income Tax Rates of 2003
- Raise Cigarette, Alcohol, and Gas Taxes (Excise Taxes)
- Repeal the Capital Gains Deduction that allows investments to be taxed at lower rate than the hard-earned wages of New Mexico workers

Safeguarding School Employee Retirement

Retirement credit is earned compensation—not a "gift" from taxpayers. Provide all education employees the full benefits of retirement through a fully funded defined benefit plan, with the original COLA's restored, without offsets for other pension plans. The financial security of the New Mexico Educational Retirement Association (ERB) must be ensured through measures supported by the stakeholder groups comprising ERB membership.

Providing Pay Equity and a Living Wage for All School Employees

Student success is enhanced with a stable, resourced high-quality educational workforce. Provide a \$15 minimum wage for school employees, including but not limited to school secretaries and other administrative support staff, food service, transport, and custodial 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, and ensure all experienced teachers at each level are similarly respected by enacting an across-the-board minimal increase of ten percent (10%). Enact and fund appropriate licensure level minimum salaries for Education Assistants/paraprofessionals, and other licensed educational professionals.

***Provide a \$15 minimum wage for school employees.
Increase Statewide Teacher Licensure Levels to
\$45,000, \$55,000 and \$65,000.***

Providing Affordable Health Insurance for Education Employees

As with student learning, the quality of teaching is impacted by educator health. Escalating health insurance premiums and benefit decreases impact recruitment and retention of quality educators. Appropriate health care options must be provided. The statutory limit for employer-paid insurance premium subsidies must be increased and funded to maintain a healthy workforce of quality educators.

Protecting Retiree Health Care

When the New Mexico Retiree Health Care Authority (NMRHCA) was created, it was not a pre-funded retirement benefits program. Provide sufficient funds to maintain the commitment made by New Mexico citizens to public employees. Limited increases in employee and employer withholdings, funded by the State, to improve the solvency of the system may be required.

Preserving Public Funding

Resist schemes to privatize the education of any public-school students. Privatization of educational services cannot be tolerated, including those supported by the PED through below-the-line programs funneling public funds to private enterprises. Privatization is an abdication of public accountability. We must avoid giving control of students' education to private, for-profit providers and charter “management” corporations—be they delivered on-site or through virtual technology.

Preventing Vouchers, Tax Credits, Public Scholarships or Other Schemes to Privatize Public Schools and Resources

Free and uniform public schools are required by the New Mexico Constitution. Direct all financial support for student education toward fulfillment of this constitutional obligation, and not toward supporting private schools, home schooling, or for-profit management of public schools, including charters. The privatization of any public-school employee positions be they full-time, part-time, or temporary, must be resisted.

Building Higher Education Funding

Higher Education funding must be fully restored, and no more cuts made. A statutorily defined formula, similar to that in the School Finance Act for Public Schools, should be enacted to provide sufficient funding for Higher Education, holding harmless all institutions during the transition. Funding cannot be allowed for any form of “Merit Pay,” but must allow Higher Education to prioritize equitable faculty and staff increases over capital costs.



Adequately Funding Fixed Costs

We advocate funding to provide for built-in fixed costs and for district flexibility so employees and elected school boards, through collective bargaining, may determine local priorities.

Crisis Schooling

Public Education Policy During/Associated With a National Health Crisis



School policies should be guided by supporting the overall health and well-being of all children, adolescents, their families, and their communities while also ensuring safe working environments for educators and school staff, including through the distribution of PPE, establishing policies to

facilitate social distancing in classrooms, and guaranteeing access to rapid response testing in case of exposure. This focus on overall health and well-being also includes addressing the behavioral/mental health needs of students and staff.

Freeze School Enrollment Numbers to Pre-Pandemic Numbers

Use the 40-day count from 2019 as the basis for school funding. Hold school districts harmless in the general appropriations bill so that the state can determine funding based on 2019-2020 enrollment figures if they are higher than the current ones.

School Interruption Policy Must Have Social/Emotional Support Funding

Lengthy time away from school and associated interruption of supportive services often results in social isolation, making it difficult for schools to identify and address important learning deficits as well as child and adolescent physical or sexual abuse, substance use, depression, and suicidal ideation. This, in turn, places children and adolescents at considerable risk of morbidity and, in some cases, mortality. Home wellness checks/visits should become an interagency priority during students' time away from school. Beyond the educational impact and social impact of school closures, there has been substantial impact on food security and physical activity for children

and families. The disproportionate impact this has had on Black, Latinx, and Native American/Alaskan Native children and adolescents must also be recognized and addressed by the Legislature.

School Ventilation Must be Checked/Upgraded

The U.S. Government Accountability Office said in a report in June that to prevent the spread of the coronavirus when inside schools, more than 41 percent of school districts need to update or replace their heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems in at least half of their buildings. Filters need to be changed and systems checked for air circulation/quality before students and educators are asked to return to in-person classes.

Student Assessment and Teacher Evaluation During a Health Crisis

There must be a legislative suspension of State-mandated student testing and State-mandated teacher evaluation during and following a national (international) health crisis. Focus and resources should instead be allocated for the health, safety and well-being of students, staff and families.

Beyond the educational impact and social impact of school closures, there has been substantial impact on food security and physical activity for children and families.

Sick and Medical Leave During a Health Crisis

Due to the pressures being put on working families during the coronavirus pandemic, requiring adequate paid sick leave and paid family and medical leave for educators and other school staff when they need those days off the most, to either recover from COVID-19 or care for a sick family member without fearing for their income or job security, must be a top priority.

Professionalism

New Teacher Induction and Mentoring

Statutorily mandated induction and mentoring programs for public education employees must, finally, be funded. Colleges of education should be funded to collaborate with and provide support for teacher induction and mentoring in public schools. Provide more support for new and existing programs to encourage more New Mexicans to enter the teaching and the other education professions as the best route to provide every New Mexico student with a highly qualified educator, rather than expanding alternative programs or relying excessively on long-term substitute teachers as the route to address our teacher shortage.



Class-Size Limit

Statutorily prohibit blanket class-size waivers, or class-size averaging that shorts the students time with educators. Large class sizes and the resulting limited one-on-one time with educators have a disproportionate negative impact on English Language Learners and other students with priority needs. Restore funding for sufficient staff, including highly qualified teachers and support service professionals, to adhere to, and meet all students' needs.

Student Assessments

Varied performance assessments conducted in a formative (on-going) manner can be used for diagnosis of student needs and improvement of instruction. Student assessments should never be used for high stakes decisions including school grading or staff evaluations and compensation. Much more emphasis must be placed on ensuring cultural and linguistic relevance and responsiveness. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to learn. Assessments which purport to measure change in performance over time within a student cohort group must be designed to measure the progress of the same students from year to year. State mandated assessments should be used as only one measure of student success. Teacher created assessments, grades based upon day to day instruction, dual language acquisition, civic/community engagement, student attendance and other locally created measures provide a more complete student assessment picture. Multiple measures must be used.

Building an Appropriate School Employee Evaluation System

Our students, and the public, deserve an educational workforce accountable to them. Student success is enhanced when evaluation systems emphasize professional growth and development. Fair evaluation systems that appropriately measure teacher impact on student achievement do not use standardized student test scores. Evaluations must be fair and impartial and based on objective observations. Only trained and certified administrators who work together as a team for student success should evaluate school employees, not outside contractors or the Public Education Department. Licensure advancement and evaluation must be fair and transparent and available to all licensed employees, not as a subterfuge for Merit-Pay schemes.

Meaningful Evaluation. Linda Darling-Hammond, Ph.D., author of *Getting Teacher Evaluation Right: What Really Matters for Effectiveness and Improvement*, highlights the following characteristics of meaningful teacher evaluation:

- Standards-based, systemic, and coherent,
- Focused on performance,
- Includes evidence of teacher practice, professional contributions, and student learning,
- Uses multiple measures to reflect instructional practice, and
- Uses multiple measures to assess student learning.

Employee Rights



Due Process and Just Cause

Unjust adverse job actions against any school employee destabilizes the provision of high-quality education for our students. Statutory provisions for due process procedures guarantee just cause for all discipline and program decisions of educational management. Preserve and enhance current rights and extend them to higher education and supervisory employees.

Sustaining Collective Bargaining

Students gain a lifelong love of learning when their educators have a significant role in educational and professional decisions and workplace conditions. The process of elected employee representatives of their choice collectively bargaining with their elected Boards of Education and the administrators who serve them, as provided for under the Public Employee Bargaining Act, must be maintained. So-called "Right to Work" legislation and other efforts to diminish the influence of Unions in the workplace must be opposed.

