




B i t e s i z e

 New Mexico school district per-student revenue grew by 1.5 percent between FY15 and FY16 but less than the national average of 2.5 percent. The U.S. Census Bureau reports per-pupil revenue for U.S. school districts increased by \$568 to \$13,814 in FY16. New Mexico's grew by \$157 to \$11,771. However, New Mexico commits a greater share of its resources to public schools than most states, ranking 10th in the nation for school revenue as a share of personal income.

 The Public Education Department has allocated \$33.6 million to prekindergarten programs in 65 school districts and six state-chartered schools for FY19, including almost \$1.1 million for new programs. The department received \$8 million to expand prekindergarten services to 4-year-olds in FY19, while the Children, Youth, and Families Department received \$2.5 million to expand early prekindergarten services to 3-year-olds. Total FY19 state funding for both services is \$64 million.

 A congressional proposal to prohibit the spending of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funding on child care or child welfare activities could mean the state would need to find a new source of funding for \$50 million in early childhood programs. For FY19, \$3.5 million of the state's TANF grant is appropriated to the Public Education Department for prekindergarten and \$52.6 million is appropriated for early childhood programs at the Children, Youth and Families Department.



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Senator Mimi Stewart, Chair / Representative G. Andrés Romero, Vice Chair / Rachel S. Gudgel, Director / June 2018

From the Chairwoman

Fundamental Justice

Depending on the political point of view, Trump's policies on undocumented aliens are either keeping America safe from lawbreakers or cruelly violating the human rights of valuable, often long-time residents and tearing families apart. But no matter the view, public schools are paying a price.

News reports on the fallout of several high-profile workplace raids conducted by the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers all contain a common element: Public school attendance drops; immigrant students and their friends are unfocused and stressed; teachers are left wondering how to help students who might no longer have a place to live.

In Las Cruces, in February 2017, public schools saw a 60 percent hike in absenteeism in the days following the raid of a trailer park popular with immigrants. The school district, concerned for the students' well-being, sent social workers to their homes to make sure the students were safe. School officials expressed fears that schools, once off limits to immigration enforcement, were no longer as safe as they were, and ICE would push the limits on gray areas, like bus stops and school buses. The superintendent sent a letter with a bus of high school students headed to an out-of-town event that identified the trip as a school activity in case the bus was stopped at a checkpoint.

Even without a raid, the 45 percent increase in deportations in the last two years has instilled fear in immigrant children, with aggressive ICE agents arresting parents dropping off their kids at school, arresting those attending routine check-ins with immigration officials, and targeting anyone in the country without documents. Fear that a parent will be deported translates into poorer educational outcomes, a 2012 study found, with a greater likelihood the children will drop out. A 2018 survey of staff at 730 U.S. schools found 90 percent of principals reported increased behavioral and emotional problems with immigrant students and two-thirds of those principals reported similar issues among the friends and classmates of immigrants. Two-thirds of those surveyed said academic performance among immigrant students has dropped, with some students giving up.

The U.S. Supreme Court in 1982 ruled undocumented children have a constitutional right to a free public education. In the opinion, the court said punishing a child for a parent's transgression violates fundamental concepts of justice. Society recognizes education as vital to democracy and denying access to a "disfavored group" condemns them to underclass status. Educators know this, and know their immigrant students must be free of fear if they are to learn and grow and contribute to their communities.

Senator Mimi Stewart

Game Could Be Tool To Deter Violence

A classroom game with a record for improving student behavior will be the focus of one of five hearings on school violence and mental health scheduled for the committee's June hearing in Aztec.

In addition to a hearing on the effectiveness and New Mexico's implementation of the Pax Good Behavior Game, the [agenda](#) includes sessions on gun violence and mental health, the prevention and intervention of school violence, school shooting threats and the Delinquency Act, and the aftermath of the December shooting at Aztec High School with students and parents.

The Pax Good Behavior Game, the latest iteration of a program for kindergarten through sixth grade designed to reduce student disruptions through group and self-regulation, was piloted in New Mexico schools in 2016 and is now in place in 11 school districts.

Numerous studies on Pax, in use for 50 years, have shown it improves student mental, emotional, and behavioral health by helping students to work toward shared goals, LESC staff reports in a hearing brief.

Students learn cooperation, self-regulation, and delaying gratifica-

tion for a larger goal, the brief says.

In New Mexico, observations 75 days after the pilot was launched in 33 school sites in Bloomfield, Española, and Santa Fe showed disruptive behaviors dropped by 62 percent in Bloomfield classrooms, by 57 percent in Española classrooms, and by 65 percent in Santa Fe classrooms, the Pax Institute, the organization behind the program, reports.

For the 3,300 students in the New Mexico pilot, the institute projects, based on longitudinal studies of the program, that participating schools will see an 8.6 percent drop in the need for special services, a 9.6 percent drop in serious drug use, an 11.4 percent drop in suicide, a 13.6 percent increase in high school graduation, and a 14.4 percent increase in college attendance.

After expanding the program to schools in 11 districts, surveys and observations found a 13 percent to 32 percent improvement on the combined social competence scale, the institute reports.

The game uses strategies called "kernels" to increase self-regulation and cooperation and reduce unwanted behaviors called "spl-eems."

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Conservative Unit Value Stymies Budget Planning

The Public Education Department's practice of taking a conservative approach to distributing funding to school districts and charter schools at the beginning of the budget year means schools often must develop unnecessarily lean budgets, raising concerns this year some districts will be forced to cut educational programs to cover mandated staff pay increases.

For FY19, the Legislature approved a public education budget that assumed a 3.1 percent increase in total state program costs – the amount the state assumes all school districts and charter schools need to operate – and included language that required school districts and charter schools to increase teacher pay by an average of 2.5 percent and increase pay for other staff by 2 per-

cent. In addition, statutory minimum salaries were raised \$2,000 for each level of teacher licensure and funding for serving students at risk of failing was increased.

However, the Public Education Department in April set the preliminary value of the FY19 funding unit, the dollar amount distributed to districts and charter schools per unit of the funding formula, at a level lower than that assumed in budget development, according to a [brief](#) prepared for the committee's May hearing on preliminary unit value.

The lower value reflects the department's practice over the last few years of overestimating the number of funding units – a figure based on the number of students, their specific

needs, and other school-specific conditions – and underestimating federal funding that comes in after the start of the school year.

In FY18, the department overestimated the number of units by 7,000 and underestimated the federal revenue by at least \$13 million. LESC staff estimates the department might have overestimated the unit count for FY19 by 3,000 to 4,000 units.

Once the department has estimated figures for the federal income and a final unit count, the department sets a final unit value, typically resulting in a midyear funding boost for school districts and charter schools.

The department's approach is intended to reduce the risk that school districts and charter schools will get hit with a sudden budget cut halfway through the school year.

Legislative staff has requested the department consider increasing the preliminary value and has recommended the Legislature consider ways to encourage the department to adopt less conservative assumptions to improve school district and charter school access to funds at the beginning of the school year.

Classroom Game Improves Behavior

continued from front

Kernels include transition cues, written notes praising positive behavior, and rewards in the form of brief and fun activities for good behavior.

Other examples of kernels are the use of a timer to help students stay focused, first on simple tasks then on more complex ones, and predetermined, specific consequences for misbehavior that allow students to create a logical connection between the action and the consequence.

The game is played three times a day with the class broken up into two to five teams. Teams that finish the day with three or fewer spleems earn a reward.

Teacher training for the program includes a seven-hour initial session and several two- to three-hour booster sessions to improve implementation

fidelity and provide customized interventions for specific classrooms.

The game is included in the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's *National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices*.

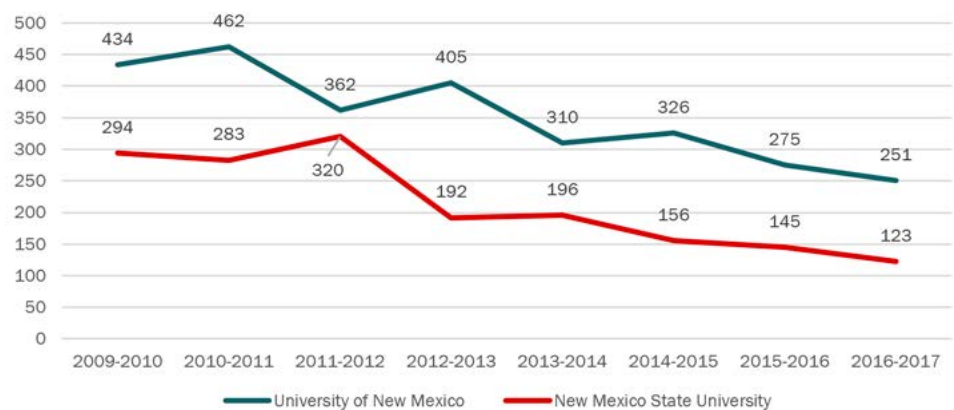
Number of Education Graduates Dropping

The number of graduates from New Mexico colleges of education dropped by a third between FY10 and FY17, from 866 to 593, according to Karen Trujillo, Ph.D., director of the Southwest Outreach Academic Lab at New Mexico State University.

At the same time, school districts in October 2017 reported 476 teacher vacancies, she told the committee during its May meeting. Because nearly two-thirds of licensed teachers in New Mexico public schools are graduates of the state's colleges of education and the schools are producing fewer graduates, school districts are likely to increase recruitment of out-of-state teachers, she concluded.

Enrollment in teacher education programs – TEPs – has been dropping steadily since 2009, according to Trujillo's [report](#).

Teacher Education Program Enrollment Trends



Source: Alliance for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning

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