




B i t e s i z e

 The University of New Mexico has launched a program that pairs education college graduates with high-quality teachers in high-need areas. The residency program ensures graduates interact regularly with experienced teachers and are prepared for the challenges of working in high-need areas. Administrators hope it increases the chances that graduates, when licensed, will choose high-need schools. Residents are paid \$25,000 a year and cooperating teachers receive \$2,000.

 An assessment of New Mexico programs for English learners finds most teachers certified for teaching English as a second language do not feel prepared to teach EL students and only 25 percent are confident they can teach Native American EL students. In response, the Public Education Department is holding workshops throughout the state, although districts must pay for attendance.

 More than four out of five charter schools that applied for state lease assistance over-reported their square footage, with more than 70 percent reporting 1,000 more square feet than eligible for reimbursement. The Public School Facilities Authority reported almost 25 percent of the 93 schools that received lease assistance in FY18 and have applied again for FY19 overreported eligible square footage by 10,000 square feet or more.



i n f o r m E D

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

From the Chairwoman

Flawed Logic

When a school fails for years to meet the standards of the state's admittedly convoluted grading system, it might seem like the logical next step would be to shut it down. But that logic ignores the often passionate support of the school's families and community and the importance of those supporters in the success of the school. Shutting down a struggling school risks breaking the community and family ties that can help a school succeed.

Numerous studies over the last 15 years by universities, education organizations, and policy think tanks have found family and community involvement is strongly linked to student success. When schools, families, and communities work together, students are more likely to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, and continue their education. Family, community, and school collaboration motivates students and promotes higher education goals, across all grades and regardless of the family's education, income, or background.

Promoting success at three struggling Albuquerque public schools is the first topic on the agenda when the committee meets this month at Hawthorne Elementary. Hawthorne, along with Los Padillas Elementary, broke a multi-year streak of failing grades by earning a C grade this year. Los Padillas and Hawthorne, as well as Whittier Elementary, are working hard to improve student success with marginal help from the PED, who is poised to shut them down, despite high numbers of low-income, mobile, and English-learning students at risk of failure in ANY school environment. Among other changes, Hawthorne has added a student-directed, passion-driven "genius hour" to each school day, 10 days to the school year, and raised pay for teachers and leaders.

The Hawthorne community has actively and loudly supported its neighborhood school, and the school district is legally challenging the state's authority to close it. The state is learning what many districts have learned over the years – communities love their schools and are willing to work hard to correct their flaws.

Rather than threaten struggling schools, the Public Education Department should help build and guide the community, family, and school alliances that could contribute to the success of students and schools.

Senator Mimi Stewart

State Law Silent on School Interventions

The lack of a state law authorizing the Public Education Department to intervene with low-performing schools means the agency relied on a single sentence from a federally required state plan to initiate action against four schools, an LESL staff brief says.

Statutory provisions defining low-performing schools and outlining school improvement plans were repealed in 2015 after federal requirements under the No Child Left Behind Act were relaxed.

The committee is scheduled to hear a report on the repealed provisions at 11:15 a.m. on September 26.

Congress replaced the No Child Left Behind Act with the Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, which gives states greater control over intervention efforts.

Both acts were reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 that governs federal Title I grants for high-poverty schools and other major federal programs.

The state's federally approved plan, required by ESSA and adopted last year, establishes that schools identified for "comprehensive support and improvement" have three years of technical assis-

tance and support from the state before being identified as in need of "more rigorous intervention."

However, the Public Education Department justified taking immediate action against Hawthorne, Los Padillas, and Whittier elementary schools in Albuquerque and Dulce Elementary School in Dulce with one sentence in the state plan: "PED will consider school performance in the 2016-2017 school year in making determinations about the immediate application of more rigorous interventions."

Without a school improvement framework in state law, the department used a request for applications for federal funding to require the four schools and their school districts to provide detailed plans and budgets explaining how they would improve school leadership, staff hiring and professional development, and school curricula and instruction.

The department initially rejected all four plans and sent a series of letters each with new conditions not included in the prior communications that, if unmet, could result in closure of the schools.

Since then, Albuquerque Public Schools has agreed to department

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Many NM Students Start Behind, Stay Behind

New Mexico students generally gain a year's worth of learning for each year in school but many students start behind and never catch up, a Legislative Finance Committee longitudinal study says.

A November 2017 [report](#) on the study following two groups of more than 20,000 students, presented to the committee in August, finds reading scores for low-income students progress at about the same rate as their more affluent peers, leaving a consistent gap between the groups and leaving many low-income students scoring below proficiency.

LFC staff told the committee the report calls for providing more students access to prekindergarten and

other high-quality early childhood programs and early education interventions, like the K-3 Plus extended school year program.

The study finds prekindergarten has a positive impact on low-income students through eighth grade, reduces the need for special education services, and prepares young children for kindergarten.

Prekindergarten combined with K-3 Plus can shrink the achievement gap by third grade but few students participate in both programs.

The study also finds a good teacher can help students progress further and more quickly, but not all students have access to high-quality teachers year after year.

Initial results from Principals Pursuing Excellence and Teachers Pursuing Excellence professional development programs show some promise for improving student performance.

However, LFC staff said the state provides no incentives for stacking interventions.

New Mexico students are very mobile – with only about half of third graders in the same school they attended for kindergarten – making it difficult both to track the impact of interventions and ensure they continue as the student moves from school to school.

LFC staff reported high mobility also lowers a student's performance regardless of income.

Debbie Rael, deputy secretary for school transformation for the Public Education Department, said schools in the Principals Pursuing Excellence program outperform the statewide average on both English and math tests. She said teachers in the professional development program also have a positive impact.

Committee members noted the decision in the lawsuit challenging the adequacy of New Mexico public schools included the conclusion that low-income students are receiving inadequate teaching.

No Law Supports Interventions

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conditions on their improvement plans for all schools but Hawthorne Elementary. The district has refused to agree to the Hawthorne plan, largely because it calls for closure if the school fails to meet department conditions.

District officials told committee members during a hearing in May they were frustrated by the department's shifting requirements, and the district has taken the department to court challenging its authority to close any school.

Both Hawthorne and Los Padillas elementary schools earned Cs in the state's school grading system for the 2017-2018 school after six years of Fs. Whittier received an F.

All three schools, which submitted similar improvement plans, are implementing educational practices found to be successful in other schools,

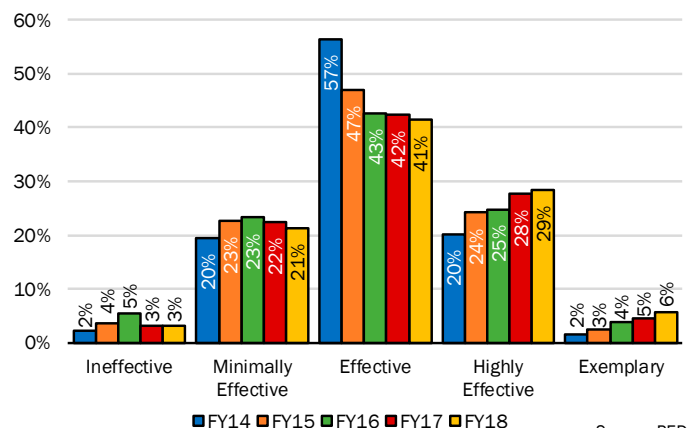
including longer school years, a "genius hour" for enrichment, help for teachers to achieve national board certification, and engagement with local businesses and other community supports.

However, the secretary-designate of the Public Education Department has told reporters the department still could close Hawthorne Elementary at the end of the school year if the district does not agree to their stipulations.

More Teachers Get Higher Rankings

Fiscal year 2018 scores from NMTeach, the statewide teacher evaluation system, show fewer teachers were rated as "minimally effective" and "effective" and more teachers as "highly effective" and "exemplary." Since FY14, the percent of effective ratings has fallen by 16 percentage points, while the percent of highly effective ratings increased by 9 percentage points and the percent of exemplary ratings by 4 percentage points. NMTeach ratings are based 40 percent on classroom observations, 35 percent on student academic growth, 15 percent on planning and professionalism, 5 percent on student and parent surveys, and 5 percent on the teacher's attendance.

Percent of Teachers Statewide at Effectiveness Ratings
Five-Year History



Source: PED

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