NEW MEXICO
Public Education Department

520 Native American Language & Culture (NALC) Certification

KatieAnn Juanico, Assistant Secretary
for Indian Education

Presentation for Indian Affairs Committee

October 30, 2026

Purpose of the Work

- Advance the expansion of Native language programming throughout schools and communities to broaden student access and participation.

- Increase the number of 520-certified Native American language and culture teachers with targeted recruitment efforts.

- Increase the number of students who graduate with the bilingualism/biliteracy state seal.



Overview of 520 NALC Certification

What is a 520 NALC Certification?

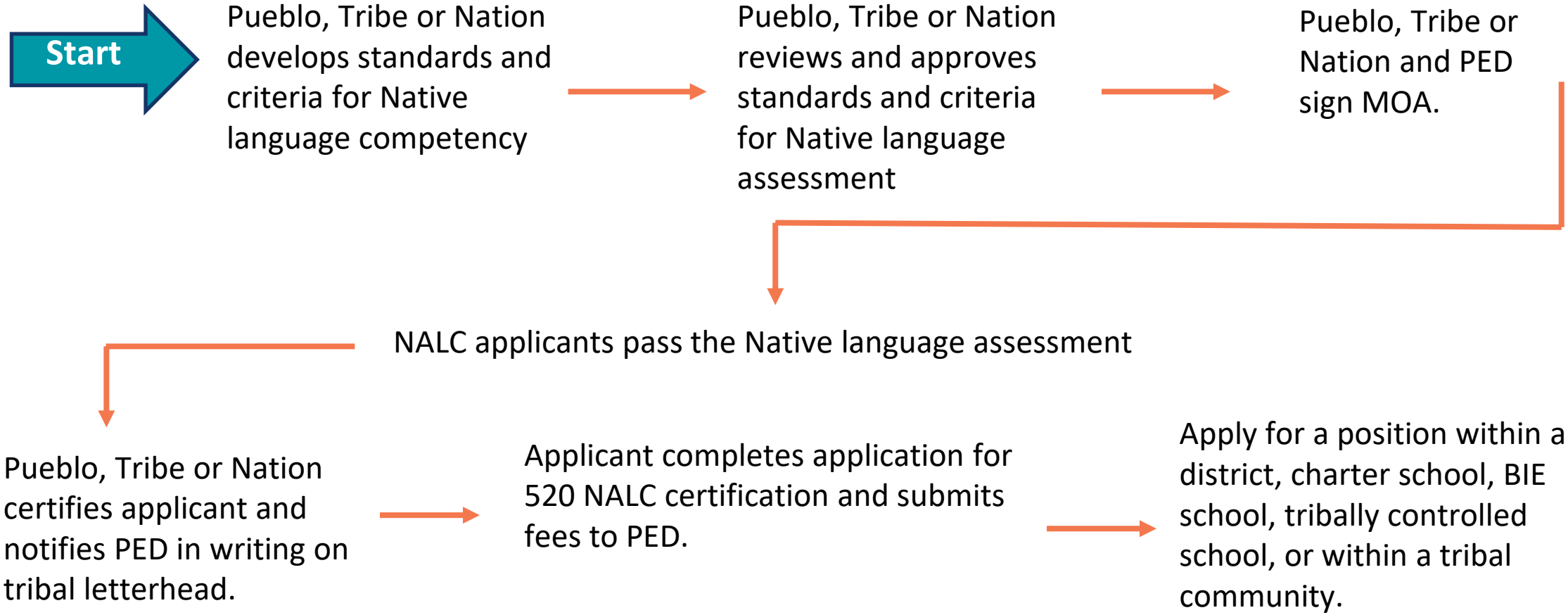
- State-issued 520 certification allows Native language and culture experts to teach in New Mexico public and charter schools.
- Confirms proficiency in a tribe's language and culture; no college degree required.
- Certified individuals may serve as instructors and must be paid at least the Level I teacher minimum if full-time.

Who qualifies to receive a 520 NALC certificate?	Who determines when a 520 NALC certification can be granted?	Who issues the 520 NALC certificate?
Individuals recognized by their tribe as proficient in that tribe's language and culture.	• Determination is made through a formal agreement between the tribe and the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED). • The tribe identifies qualified individuals. • PED honors the tribe's determination under the agreement.	Certification is issued and renewed jointly by the tribe and PED following established procedures.

520 NALC Certificates Referenced in Statute

2003	2022
Addition to Public School Code, Section 44, to include 22-10A-13 Native American Language and Culture Certificates	Amended to include language that identifies the minimum annual salary for 520 NALC certificate holders to be equal to the minimum annual salary for a level one licensed teacher

520 NALC Certification Process



Status of 520 NALC Certifications

Total 520 NALC Certificate Holders in NM **147***

* PED Licensure Bureau, Data retrieved October 2026

Native Languages	Number of 520 NALC Certificate Holders	Districts and Charter Schools Utilizing 520 NALC Teachers for Language and Culture Instruction, SY 25/26**
Navajo (Diné)	83	Albuquerque, Aztec, Bloomfield, Central Consolidated, Cuba, Farmington, Gallup, Native American Community Academy (NACA), Magdalena, Jemez Mountain, Dream Dine, Hozho Academy, Six Directions (13 Districts)
Keres	20	Bernalillo (San Felipe, Santa Ana, Kewa, & Cochiti), Grants (Laguna & Acoma), NACA (Laguna)
Tewa	3	Pojoaque (Ohkay Owingeh), Española (San Ildefonso & Nambe)
Tiwa	6	Los Lunas (Isleta), Peñasco (Picuris), Taos (Taos), NACA (Isleta)
Towa	2	Walatowa Charter, San Diego Riverside
Jicarilla Apache	3	Dulce
Mescalero Apache	2	Ruidoso, Tularosa
Zuni	15	Zuni, Albuquerque, NACA, Hozho Academy
Lakota	1	NACA
Total	**135**	**26 Districts & Charter Schools**

*** SY 25/26 80-Day Snapshot; Count includes individuals teaching in public school districts or charter schools during the 2025–2026 school year. Does not include 520-certified instructors teaching in tribal communities, BIE schools, or Tribally Controlled Schools.*

Status of Memorandums of Agreement Filed with PED

Pueblo, Tribe or Nation	Date Signed	Pueblo, Tribe or Nation	Date Signed
Jicarilla Apache	9/8/2003	**Pueblo of Cochiti**	10/13/2006
Pueblo of Zuni	8/13/2004	**Pueblo of Zia**	11/13/2006
Navajo Nation	10/27/2004	**Pueblo of Isleta**	3/15/2007
Pueblo of Santa Ana	12/14/2004	**Pueblo of Santa Clara**	1/15/2008
Pueblo of Acoma	9/12/2005	**Pueblo of San Felipe**	2/18/2008
Pueblo of Laguna	11/9/2005	**Pueblo of Picuris**	6/8/2009
Pueblo of Santo Domingo	12/21/2005	**Pueblo of Jemez**	7/15/2009
Ohkay Owingeh	1/17/2006	**Pueblo of Taos**	2/28/2011
Mescalero Apache	2/2/2006	**Pueblo of Sandia**	7/20/2026

Formalizing the 520 NALC Certification Process

- Identify best practices developed by tribes that can serve as models for others.
- Recognize varying stages of 520 NALC certification within tribes to better target and intensify PED support.
- Integrate a structured pathway to strengthen tribal capacity and self-determined growth.



Next Steps

- Expand opportunities for success in the classroom after attaining a 520 NALC certificate.
- Work with districts and charter schools to recruit and hire 520 NALC certificate holders.



For More Information

KatieAnn Juanico, Assistant Secretary,

Indian Education Division

KatieAnn.Juanico@ped.nm.gov

(505) 709-7246