



Addressing Challenges in New Mexico's Micro-Districts: A Legislative Briefing



MOSQUERO
M U N I C I P A L S C H O O L S
"Rural Education In Action"



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May 13, 2025

Why Micro-Districts Matter

- Many of New Mexico's school districts serve small, rural communities.
- These districts are essential to
 - **community identity**
 - **workforce pipelines**
 - **and student success.**
- Without targeted support, micro-districts face systemic disadvantages **that threaten educational equity.**



Key Issues for Micro-Districts

1. Educational Outcomes

2a. Education Programming & Scale

2b. Transportation Access & Scale

3. Financial Sustainability

4. Capital Outlay Challenges



1. Educational Outcomes

MICRO-DISTRICT CHALLENGES

- Limited instructional choices for classes
- Multi-grade classrooms impact instructional depth and pacing
- Recruitment of highly qualified educators remains a persistent barrier

MICRO-DISTRICT BENEFITS

- Higher graduation rates
- Higher test scores
- Higher attendance rates
- Fewer discipline infractions



Solutions

- Dual Credit and Early College High School models create opportunities with local colleges to leverage human capital while expanding pathways for students.
- Mobile learning labs can be shared regionally, bringing CTE-based solutions for high-need careers such as health care, vet science, construction trades, culinary arts, and cosmetology, among many others to the most remote areas.
- Teacher incentives to encourage teachers to move to rural districts, such as teaching housing projects and 4-day school weeks.



Local Control

CURRENT 4-DAY WEEK

- Instructional Day at 7.75 hours
- Travel times average 12 hours/week
- Instructional time 31 hours/week

IMPACT OF MANDATED 5-DAY WEEK

- Instructional days shortened to 5.5 hours
- Travel times increase to 15 hours/week
- Instructional time 27.5 hours/week

There is no way this move would create higher outcomes.

Research has proven time again, that the number one indicator of improved student outcomes is **teaching quality**, not days of instruction.
(Henebery, 2023)



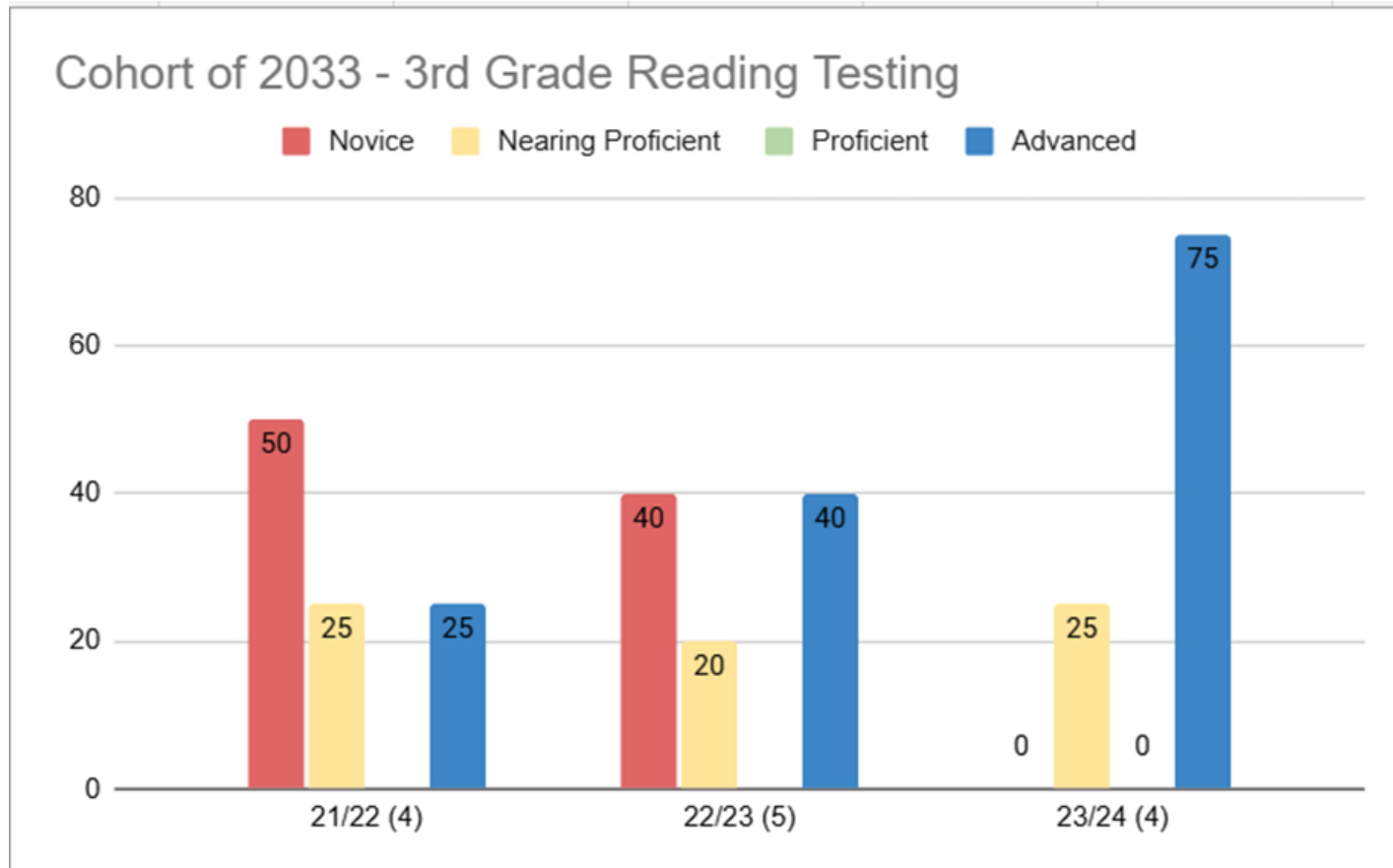
Local Control (cont.)

- Impact of Recent 4-Day Week Limitations for Calendar Submissions
 - 4-day week declaration (no weeks allowed with 5 instructional days).
 - Created a net loss of three instructional days (-23.25 hours).
 - School calendar tool only allows for instruction from 8 AM - 4 PM.
 - Mosquero has 36 instructional hours in school-wide CTE activities that are unaccounted for by PED due to 7.5 hour maximum day (-36 hours).

23.25 + 36 = net loss of 59.25 hours of instruction



Mosquero Highlights



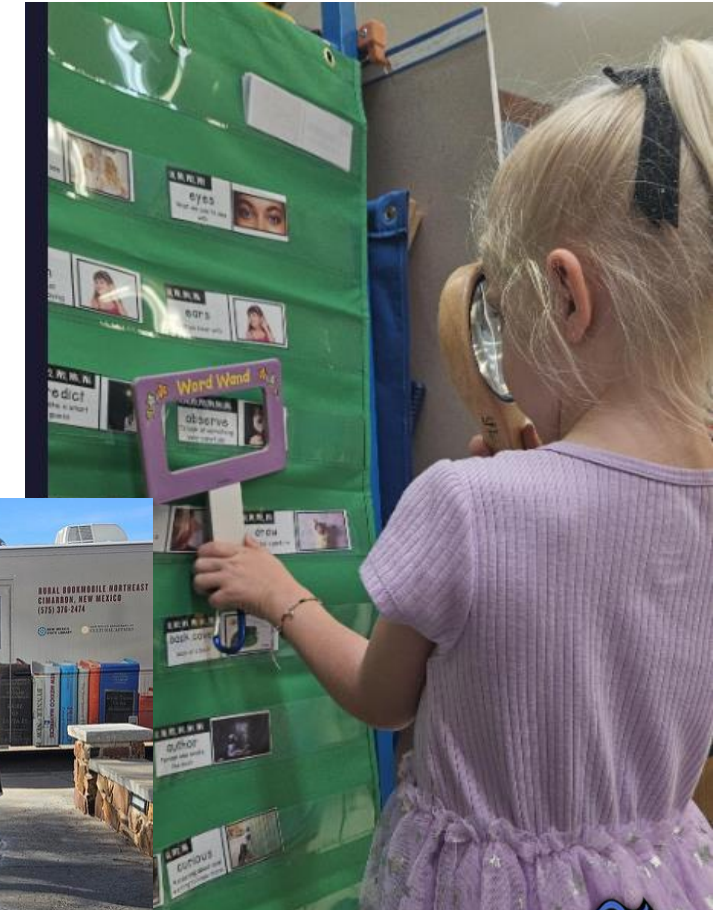
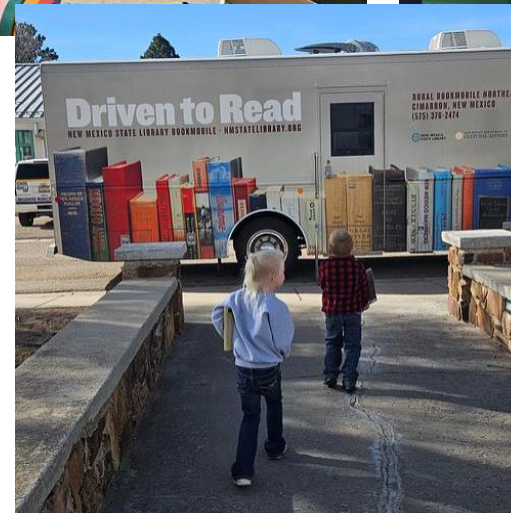
- **Test Scores on the Rise**

- Math and Reading interventions have shown to boost test scores.
- Trendlines can be significantly impacted given class sizes are extremely small.



Action Learning in Mosquero

- **“Magical” Pre-K Program**
 - Grounded in Play-based learning
 - STEM-based curriculum with integrated Structured Literacy & SEL instruction (Connect4Learning) and introductory CTE connections
 - Provides access to ancillary and community-based services
 - Meets the needs of local families through unique delivery schedule, honoring decades-long tradition of a graduated start to formal academics



Educational Outcomes



Action Learning in Mosquero

- **Mixed-Age Learning Experiences:** Foster peer mentoring, leadership, creative problem solving, and cooperative engagement
 - Multi-age classroom grouping
 - Integrated school activities



Educational Outcomes



Action Learning in Mosquero

- **Winning Wednesdays:** Focused on outcomes, achievement, and instructional success.
 - Elementary and High School Staff meet in PLCs on alternating Wednesdays to discuss strategies for data-driven decision making, increasing student success outcomes, and sharing positive stories.
 - Instructional coaching reflections.
- **Career Café:** A casual and engaging breakfast networking event.
 - Coming Fall 25: All staff members are responsible for scheduling 5 individuals to come in live or on Zoom to spend 15 minutes discussing specific career details with the entire student body.

Educational Outcomes



Action Learning in Mosquero

- **Beyond Our Walls:** Expanding our vision by stepping into others'.
 - Find schools with similar challenges and model on their success stories.
 - Visits to Roscoe ISD, Hamlin ISD, Floydada ISD
 - Collaboration with other rural NM School Districts



Educational Outcomes



Action Learning in Mosquero

- **Professional Development:** Staff have attended and *presented at conferences
 - state-wide (*NM Association for the Education of Young Children, NM Association for Career and Technical Education)
 - nationally (*National Rural Educators Association Conference, GYTO)
 - internationally (*Association for the International Agriculture and Extension Education)

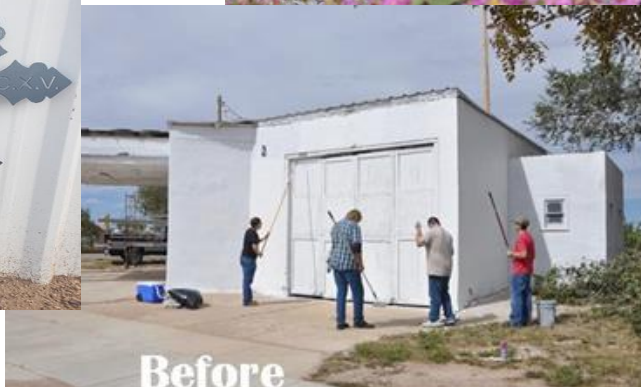


Educational Outcomes



Actions in Mosquero

- **Community Participation**– Integrating learning and service opportunities
 - Public-Facing Student Businesses
 - Village Beautification
 - Senior Social Engagement Activities



Educational Outcomes

Before

After



2a. Education Programming & Scale

MICRO-DISTRICT CHALLENGES

- Instability in programs for CTE, dual credit, or AP programs.
- Reliance on mobile labs and regional partnerships is growing, but inconsistent.
- Scale makes per-student investment appear high but often reflects fixed costs.

MICRO-DISTRICT BENEFITS

- Low Student/Teacher Ratios
- Flexibility to individualize student instruction
- Opportunities to leverage Ed Fellows for transforming local community stakeholders into teachers with higher longevity in rural communities



Mosquero Programming Highlights

- **Unique CTE Offerings and Student-Involved Income Streams including:**

- Publication of the Harding County Roundup
- Equestrian Arena and Event Center Management
- Coffee shop
- RV Park
- Tire Shop
- Graphic Design Shop
 - Laser Engraver
 - Plasma Cutter
 - Digital Design



Educational Programming & Scale

Mosquero Programming Highlights

- **Co-curricular and Extracurricular Activities:**
 - Successful Athletes (Co-op, MMS, MConnected)
 - Exemplary FFA Chapter



Educational Programming & Scale



Ed Fellows

May be the most effective program PED has EVER initiated to promote education as a desirable career.

However, requiring a cost-share for participation in the Ed Fellows program would **significantly disadvantage** New Mexico's smallest and most remote school districts.



Ed Fellows (cont.)

- Micro-districts operate with minimal staff and limited discretionary funding.
- A cost-share would deter rural and remote schools from participating in Ed Fellows, **effectively excluding access** to high-quality teacher candidates and instructional support.
- The requirement would **deepen existing inequities** in access to teacher training programs.



Ed Fellows Proposed Solutions

- **Guaranteed Allotment:** Each LEA receives a guaranteed number of fully funded Fellows based on size and need. This includes salary, benefits, and mentor teacher stipends.
- **Cost-share Opportunities:** Districts may request additional Fellows with a required local match for stipends and benefits.

PROPOSED DISTRICT ALLOCATION		
Micro/Rural	< 500 students	3 Fellows
Small/Mid	500-3000 students	6 Fellows
Large/Urban	> 3000 students	9 Fellows



2b. Transportation Access & Scale

- Fuel, maintenance, and labor costs are **disproportionately higher** per student.
- Students face **long travel times** to access regional programs, extracurriculars (both school-based and community-based), and necessities for daily living such as medical services.
- Missed instructional time due to challenging travel logistics **decreases academic consistency**.



Solutions

- **Maintaining a 4-day week** allows both students and staff the opportunity for weekday access to medical needs, extra-curricular activities, and increases opportunity for work-based learning time, while **reducing absenteeism**.
- **SUV's should be funded as a transportation alternative** to route vehicles for rural districts.
 - The mileage is funded at .5 the rate of a bus.
 - SUV is not funded in the transportation formula.
 - SUV route drivers are more accessible.
 - Extended driver training is required, but a CDL is not.
 - CDL drivers get consumed by higher paying companies.
 - SUV's are more eco-friendly than small buses.

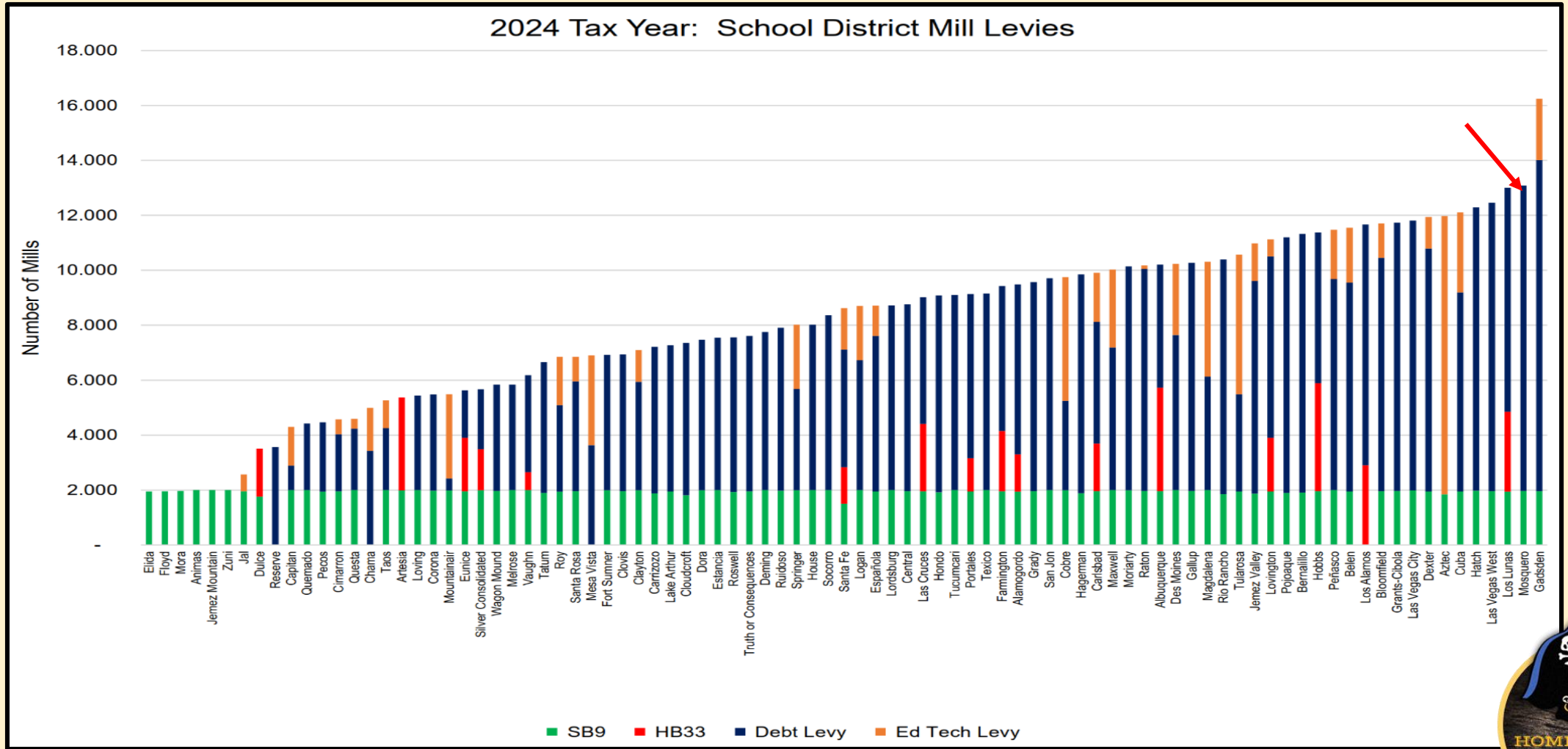


3. Financial Sustainability

- Small tax bases limit local revenue for operations and matching funds.
- High per-student costs tied to operational necessities, **not inefficiency**.
- Reliance on state equalization without rural-specific adjustments creates shortfalls.
- Inflexible or categorical funding **fails to meet rural needs**.



Community Support



Solutions

- Schools with less than 100 students cannot meet the minimal instructional and administrative needs to accelerate student outcomes.
- Must be funded as if there were **100 students** that would translate into a minimum of **400 units** at the current unit value.
- Mosquero had to create an online school to generate revenue and be freed from emergency supplemental funding.
 - The only pathway to innovation in teaching and learning.
 - The only way we can begin to cover the administrative reporting burden.
 - The only way we can afford a Principal and an Instructional Coach.



4. Capital Outlay Challenges

- Navigation of PSCOC/PSFA processes requires **administrative expertise not available in micro-districts.**
 - Every large-scale capital project in a microdistrict should include funding for an owner's representative.



4. Capital Outlay Challenges (cont.)

- **Adequacy standards are not equitable.**
 - Federal law under IDEA requires schools to provide ancillary services for students with disabilities. Spaces for services **are not provided** for in adequacy standards.
 - Special Education Classrooms should be allocated the same or more storage/features as other classrooms **not less**.
 - Some schools received athletic facilities, while others were told they were **not allowable**.
 - **Security systems** are not funded.



4. Capital Outlay Challenges (cont.)

- Contractor availability is limited in remote areas, raising costs and causing delays.
- HB 82 changes may significantly impact micro-districts' ability to participate.
 - Original legislation created a pathway for districts with limited bonding capacity to qualify for a waiver of their share for capital projects.
 - HB 82 lowered the mill rate from 10 mills to 7, and raised the maximum student enrollment from 800 to 1500.



Thought

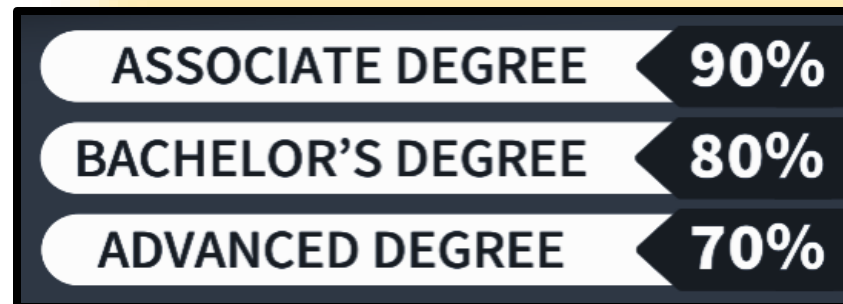
“Micro-districts are small in size, but enormous in impact. Strategic support ensures rural students aren't left behind - no matter their zip code.”



Mosquero's Goals

Our plan is to leverage CTE to boost student outcomes

- In 25-26, all students, K-12, will be required to complete an age-appropriate CTE related research project.
- In 25-26, all 8th grade students will choose an associate's degree pathway and CTE completer pathway.
- By 2027 all graduates will be qualified completers in two career pathways.
- By 2028 graduates will have an individualized pathway for completing an associates degree.



CTE in New Mexico

35%

of New Mexico jobs will require education beyond high school but less than a bachelor's degree by 2031. Career and technical education (CTE) programs prepare students for these jobs in key New Mexico industries such as:

- aerospace
- film and television
- sustainable and green energy
- sustainable and value-added agriculture

In 2023, more than 1,700 New Mexico high school CTE concentrators participated in dual credit prior to graduating.



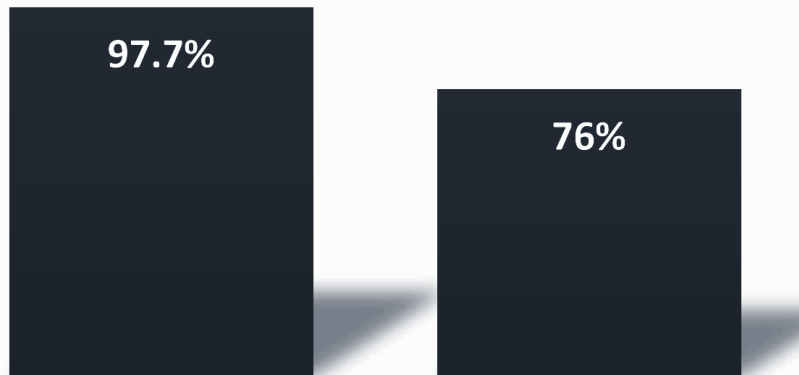
CTE-Based Outcomes in New Mexico

OUTCOMES, 2020-2021 school year²

98% of New Mexico high school students participating in CTE programs graduated

45% of CTE high school students received Post-Program Placement

52% of New Mexico CTE postsecondary students earned a credential, certificate, or degree



CTE Concentrators

All Students

Four-year cohort graduation rate in New Mexico (2021-22)

More investment is needed to scale CTE programs across New Mexico to ensure that all learners have access to high-quality CTE programs in high-skill, high-wage and in-demand career fields.

Why CTE is Critical for All NM Students

Educational Impact of CTE = **Academic Equity**

- In 2018, Judge Singleton ruled that all New Mexico students **have a right to be college and career ready** and that the state is failing to meet this obligation. Yazzie/Martinez sharpened the focus on equity in education - especially low-income, Native American, English language learner (ELL), and students with disabilities. This conversation is rooted in **personal satisfaction** and academic and career well-being.
- Equity in education is sprouted by tending to the social aspects that inspire students, leading with **choices in college and career opportunities**.
- Student engagement is absolutely a pivotal lever in the learning process. When students are engaged, **attendance and participation increase and learning is achieved**.

Thought

“Students can find their identity in skilled trades if barriers that stand in the way of equalizing the educational playing field are removed.”

(Bruhn, 2024)



Mosquero's Culture of Innovation

- Implement leadership and strategic planning sessions to drive innovation district-wide.
- Use **dedicated state funding** for professional development to cultivate innovation and risk-taking in instructional practices.
- Establish structured mentoring and regular innovation forums showcasing local initiatives.
- Work with outside partnerships such as Collegiate Edu-Nation (CEN) to make our CTE and overall student success goals a reality



CEN

COLLEGIATE EDU-NATION

Vision:

To End Generational Poverty In Rural America

Mission:

To empower rural school districts and communities to support and educate students through postsecondary, leading to meaningful careers for lifetime success.

2024 Outcomes



48%

Students in P-20 districts are earning dual credit during their high school years



44%

Class of 2024 earned a high-wage, high-demand industry certification



22%

Class of 2024 earned an associate degree prior to high school graduation



51%

Class of 2024 have continued into years 13 & 14 for college degree completion.

Mosquero's Goals for CEN Partnership

- **Data-Informed Decision-Making**
 - Advanced data analysis systems & stakeholder forums
- **Student-Directed Research and Project-Based Learning (PBL)**
 - Integration of research-based programs and peer mentorship
- **AVID and Academic Rigor**
 - Advancement Via Individual Determination
- **School-Operated Businesses**
 - Expand existing and initiate new based on community needs
- **Enhanced Community & Higher Education Partnerships**
 - Regional workforce needs & dual credit programs



Mosquero's Goals for CEN Partnership

- **Learner-Centered Instructional Models**
 - Cross-curricular designs for classroom implementation
- **Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeships**
 - Structured, hands-on experiences
- **CTE Program Alignment with In-Demand NM Workforce Needs and Emerging Careers**
 - Healthcare, Renewable Energy, Ag Technology
- **Focus on Remote-Career Training**
 - Cybersecurity, Virtual Education
 - Crucial for rural communities to retain local talent



Mosquero's Goals for CEN Partnership

- **Integrated CTE and Pathways in Technology (P-TECH)**
 - Agriculture and Natural Resources; Skilled Trades & Technology, Tourism & Hospitality Management; Arts, Media & Communication; Public Administration & Community Development; Energy & Renewable Energy
- **Aligned to CEN P-20 Model**
 - College and Career Ready, Skilled for Success, Well-Rounded, Committed to Rural Communities
- **Edu-REACH and Rural Teacher Development**
 - Recruit, train, and retain local teachers, with dedicated rural-focused funding for incentives, professional development, and advanced certifications.



Policy Recommendations: Key Issues

Create CTE Educational Pathway Diploma:

- Develop a reliable pathway through CTE for high school students grounded in apprentice positions and industry certifications.

Enhance Rural Workforce Pipelines:

- Create incentives for educators and trade professionals to serve rural areas.

Support Regional Delivery Models:

- Invest in mobile labs, virtual instruction hubs, and shared staffing.

Flexible Transportation Funding:

- Recognize unique rural geography in transportation allocations.

Fund Rural Equity:

- Adjust funding formulas to account for unavoidable rural scale issues.
- Fund micro-districts with a minimum of 400 units under the current unit value.

Streamline Capital Processes:

- Provide technical support and policy flexibility for small districts.



Policy Recommendations: Regional CTE

Regional Collaboration Policy:

- Establish policies permitting and encouraging smaller rural districts to form consortia for the purpose of offering diverse regional CTE pathways.

Creation of Regional CTE Centers:

- Develop a state-sponsored initiative for the creation and funding of regional CTE centers that serve multiple districts, providing economies of scale and broader access to resources.

Transportation Funding and Accessibility:

- Implement policy changes to provide dedicated transportation funding or incentives for districts sharing a regional CTE center, improving student accessibility.

Industry Partnership Incentives:

- Enact tax incentives or state-funded grant opportunities for industries that actively engage with and support regional CTE centers through mentorship, internships, and apprenticeships.

Shared Governance and Accountability:

- Outline clear governance frameworks for shared management and accountability among participating districts, ensuring equity and consistency in program delivery.



Policy Recommendations: P-TECH/P-20

Legislative Authorization:

- Introduce legislation to formally recognize and fund 6-year early college programs within the public education framework.

High School Support Structure Extension:

- Amend state education policy to allow students to retain high school-level support services (counseling, tutoring, special education services, etc.) for the duration of their enrollment in the early college program.

Program Designation and Application Process:

- Create a transparent and structured application process managed by the Public Education Department (PED) for high schools to apply and be officially designated as 6-year early college P-TECH/P20 institutions.
- Develop clear standards and criteria for approval, including partnerships with local community colleges or universities, established industry collaborations, and proven infrastructure for student support.

Funding Adjustments:

- Revise funding formulas to reflect extended support services, ensuring adequate funding per student for schools running these extended programs



