

MINUTES
Legislative Education Study Committee
Gallup, New Mexico
September 3-5, 2025

Wednesday, September 3

The following voting, advisory, and guest members were present:

Voting: Chair William P. Soules; Vice Chair G. Andrés Romero; Senators Mimi Stewart and Craig W. Brandt; Representatives Debra M. Sariñana, Joy Garratt, and Raymundo Lara.

Advisory: Senators Anthony L. Thornton, Harold Pope, Jr., Linda M. Lopez, Natalie Figueroa; Representatives Catherine J. Cullen, D. Wonda Johnson, Diane Torres-Velasquez, John Block, Patricia Roybal Caballero, and Yanira Gurrola.

Guest: Senator Shannon Pinto.

(1) Call to Order, Introductions, and Approval of October Agenda and September Minutes. Senator William P. Soules, Chair, LESC, called the meeting to order at 9:08 AM. Chair Soules facilitated introductions of the members of LESC. John Sena, Director, LESC, introduced LESC staff. A quorum of voting members was not present at the start of the meeting. On September 4, a quorum was present. In a motion by Representative Joy Garratt and a second by Vice Chair G. Andrés Romero, the agenda for the September LESC hearing was approved. The meeting minutes for the July LESC hearing were also approved with a motion by Senate President Pro Tempore Mimi Stewart and a second by Representative Debra M. Sariñana.

(2) Community Welcome. Mike Hyatt, Superintendent, Gallup-McKinley County Schools (GMCS); Jvanna Hanks II, Deputy Superintendent, GMCS; Kristen Bischoff, Lead Director of Instruction, GMCS; and Kyndee Keeler, Director of College, Career, and Civic Readiness, GMCS, presented to lawmakers on GMCS initiatives aimed at improving student achievement and supporting well-rounded educational experiences. Presenters discussed the district's strategic plan, reviewed trends in the graduation rate and student achievement, and outlined the district's instructional philosophy and financial outlook.

Members asked about the district's approach to strategic plan implementation, community engagement, and Native American education. Additionally, lawmakers asked for more information on the district's online academy, including enrollment and instructor qualifications.

(3) Superintendent Panel. Mark A. Montoya, Senior Policy Analyst II, LESC; Mike Hyatt, Superintendent, GMCS; Steve Carlson, Superintendent, Central Consolidated School District; and Randy Stickney, Superintendent, Zuni Public Schools, answered panel questions regarding the structured literacy initiative and support needed for implementation, successes and challenges encountered in improving student math outcomes, districts' schedules and the time students are focusing on core academics and specials. Additionally, superintendents discussed the time teachers have for things like teacher prep, review

of student data, collaboration and learning, impacts of revisions to the state equalization guarantee, and the unique challenges and updates from superintendents' respective districts.

Members requested additional information on how school districts are addressing attendance issues, as well as how they support students who are present in class but not receiving adequate instruction. They also asked whether districts are considering embedding time within the school day for teacher collaboration and professional development. Additionally, members emphasized the state's role in ensuring schools are accessible to parents and offer services and extracurricular activities that encourage student attendance.

(4) Statewide Student Information System Rollout Update. Gregory Frostad, Assistant Secretary of Policy and Technology, Public Education Department (PED); and Justin Berg, Vice President of Partner Success and Chief Product Expert, Edupoint Educational Systems, provided an update on PED's initiative to provide a statewide student information system (SSIS). Assistant Secretary Frostad discussed the potential benefits of an SSIS, including easier access to student data, improved accessibility to families and students enrolled at different schools, and reduced costs for schools and the state. Assistant Secretary Frostad outlined PED's process in vetting vendors that included stakeholder input across the state. PED selected Edupoint Educational Systems for statewide implementation that will begin with assigning schools into three-year cohorts based on their sign-up date. Mr. Berg provided an Edupoint product demonstration for members.

Committee members discussed accessibility constraints and language barriers for users, data security and privacy, PED's collaboration with the New Mexico Department of Information Technology during implementation, as well as data sovereignty for tribal communities. Additional discussions included possible data tracking from cradle to career with collaboration between the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department and the New Mexico Higher Education Department.

(5) Public Education Department Public School Support Request. Mariana Padilla, Cabinet Secretary, PED; and Gregory Frostad, Assistant Secretary of Policy and Technology, PED, presented the FY27 Public School Support Request (PSSR). The total request for the state equalization guarantee was \$4.5 billion, with increased funding for instructional materials, NUMeROS math professional development, and fixed costs. Secretary Padilla noted an overall decrease in the impact of the PSSR on state finances - a 1.2 percent reduced impact on the general fund, and a total decreased impact of 3.8 percent on all funds, primarily due to compensation and insurance costs not being included. The request reflects a decrease in non-recurring costs and an increase in recurring funding. The request also outlines key initiatives in areas such as educator recruitment and quality, literacy, student nutrition, accountability, academic interventions, math and STEAM, special education, graduation, and school safety. The PED agency budget request was also included in the presentation.

Committee members requested additional information on several topics, including current PED vacancy rates, average PED employee tenure, and PED turnover rates.

Additional inquiries focused on the effectiveness of the Educator Fellows Program, details on training middle school and math teachers, and an update on the use of the \$3 million allocated to STEM education. Members sought clarification on how PED is tracking potential federal funding cuts to public education and whether the department is monitoring trends of higher education faculty transitioning into public schools for better pay and benefits.

(6) Update on New School Board Training. Mariana Padilla, Cabinet Secretary, PED; and David Vincent, Federal Program Monitor Specialist, PED, updated lawmakers on the department's implementation of new school board training requirements enacted by the Legislature in the 2023 legislative session.

Mr. Vincent outlined the roles and responsibilities of local school board members and discussed the department's accountability model to ensure board member compliance with training requirements. Mr. Vincent also explained how the department approves training courses. Finally, he previewed next steps for PED, including efforts to expand the training network to serve rural communities and the planned launch of a new school board training guidance website.

Members expressed concern about the high turnover rate of superintendents in New Mexico and its impact on student achievement, as well as the effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms in response to noncompliance with training. The committee also discussed PED's role as an oversight entity, along with other state agencies, to investigate alleged board member misconduct.

Thursday, September 4

The following voting, advisory, and guest members were present:

Voting: Chair William Soules; Vice Chair G. Andrés Romero; Senators Mimi Stewart and Craig W. Brandt; Representatives Brian Baca, Debra M. Sariñana, Joy Garratt, and Raymundo Lara.

Advisory: Senators Anthony L. Thornton, Harold Pope, Jr., Linda M. Lopez, Natalie Figueroa; Representatives Catherine J. Cullen, D. Wonda Johnson, Diane Torres-Velasquez, John Block, Patricia Roybal Caballero, and Yanira Gurrola.

Guest: Senator George K. Muñoz

(7) Hispanic Education and Bilingual Multicultural Education Advisory Councils. Natasha Davalos, Policy Analyst I, LESC; Julia Rosa Emslie, Hispanic Education Liaison, PED; Adam Amador, Ph.D., Chair, Hispanic Education Advisory Council, and Chief Academic Officer and Principal, Alma d'Arte Charter High School; Mayra Valtierrez, Director of Language and Culture Policy, PED; and Rita Holguin, Member, Bilingual Multicultural Education Advisory Council, and Bilingual Teacher, Rio

Grande Elementary School, presented on the roles, advisements, and progress of the advisory councils established under the state's Bilingual Multicultural Education Act (BMEA) and Hispanic Education Act (HEA).

Members requested data on bilingual program trends, bilingual-certified teachers, and graduates earning the bilingual seal. Members also asked about instructional materials, and presenters confirmed councils can advise on culturally and linguistically relevant resources.

Discussion also focused on family and student voice, Spanish heritage language, and systemic barriers. Presenters described the use of biannual summits to gather stakeholder input, partnerships with the University of New Mexico and New Mexico State University to build heritage language models, and examples of family engagement in Hatch Valley.

Additional concerns included advisory council vacancies. Members requested updates on BMEA and HEA funding sources, accountability, and unresolved advisories, and raised concerns about reliance on non-recurring appropriations for the Hispanic Education Bureau.

(8) Revenue Estimates. Daniel Estupiñan, Senior Fiscal Analyst II, LESC; and Ismael Torres, Chief Economist, Legislative Finance Committee (LFC), provided an overview of the preliminary consensus revenue estimates for Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27). For FY27, the consensus revenue estimates project revenues could exceed total appropriations in FY26 by \$484.8 million. The estimates also indicate FY27 recurring revenues may exceed FY26 recurring appropriations by approximately \$3.27 billion, suggesting significant capacity for non-recurring appropriations in FY27.

Members asked for additional context on the estimates for the size of the general fund reserves, the intended long-term revenue goals associated with the state's permanent funds, the impact of inflation and trade policy on the regional economy, and the opportunity costs associated with short-term investments and long-term revenue stabilization.

(9) Career-Connected Learning: Costs and Framework. Tim Bedeaux, Senior Policy Analyst II, LESC; Alexandra Lutz, Manager, College and Career Readiness Bureau, PED; Kim Lanoy-Sandoval, Executive Director, Future Focused Education (FFE); and Tony Monfiletto, Director, Instituto del Puente, FFE, discussed the costs and frameworks of career-connected learning. Mr. Bedeaux provided an overview of course sequences or aligned industry pathways called career clusters in public and charter schools and provided an analysis of career and technical education (CTE) appropriations, including recent changes in secondary student funding. Ms. Lutz provided an overview of the high-quality CTE framework implemented across New Mexico schools, including costs, student demographics, and student outcomes. Executive Director Lanoy-Sandoval and Director Monfiletto discussed findings from a survey provided by Future Focused Education (FFE) on paid student internships and summarized FFE's approach to sustain and increase access to paid student internships.

Committee members discussed the impact of career-connected learning on student achievement and engagement. Compensation, career exploration, and job-training were also discussed.

(10) Gallup-McKinley County Schools Career Pathways Site Visit. LESC committee members and staff visited Hiroshi Miyamura High School to see the school's use of career pathways to orient student learning. Students can choose between engineering, business, healthcare, and media tracks and take courses incorporating these topics into both core subject areas and electives.

Students and staff representing each of the four career pathways participated in panel discussions to explore their perceptions of the school's instructional approach and its role in supporting student success.

Friday, September 5

The following voting, advisory, and guest members were present:

Voting: Chair William P. Soules; Senators Mimi Stewart and Craig W. Brandt; Representatives Brian Baca, Debbie Sariñana, Joy Garratt, and Raymundo Lara

Advisory: Senators Ant Thornton, Harold Pope, Jr., and Natalie Figueroa; Representatives D. Wonda Johnson, Diane Torres-Velasquez, John Block, and Yanira Gurrola.

Guest: Senator Shannon Pinto

(12) LFC Evaluation: Healthy Universal School Meals. Dr. Ryan Tolman, Program Evaluator III, LFC; Josh Chaffin, Program Evaluator, LFC; Gregory Frostad, Assistant Secretary of Policy and Technology, PED; and Laura Henry-Hand, Senior Manager, Student Success and Wellness Bureau, PED, presented to the committee on the findings of LFC's program evaluation of the Healthy Universal School Meals (HUSM) program.

LFC evaluators noted moderate participation increases in student participation in school meals and highlighted New Mexico's highest-in-the-nation rate of community eligibility provision participation. Evaluators also analyzed the projected impacts of recent federal legislation on the program. Regarding progress on meal quality improvement, evaluators indicated incomplete program tracking at the department, as well as relatively low levels of compliance with PED's administrative rule to date.

In their agency response, PED staff stated many of the recommendations provided by LFC are already in the process of being implemented by the department, while also urging caution on drawing conclusions from an evaluation of a relatively new program.

Members asked about the increasing costs of the program and inquired about efforts to streamline school nutrition processes to reduce costs. Lawmakers also asked about the barriers faced by schools in spending school kitchen infrastructure funding and discussed the use of \$2 million

of the total HUSM appropriation to support New Mexico Grown, a previously separate line item in the General Appropriation Act.

(13) Federal Funding Update. Daniel Estupiñan, Senior Fiscal Analyst II, LESC, provided an update on the congressional appropriations process and potential LESC staff participation in the special legislative session beginning October 1, 2025.

Members commented on the frequency in changes in federal budget and policy.

(14) Director's Report. John Sena, Director, LESC, gave committee members an update on LESC staff work, including the September 2025 newsletter. Director Sena also discussed recent developments in the *Martinez-Yazzie* lawsuit, focusing especially on the August community meetings held throughout the state to gather feedback on a comprehensive plan.

In a personnel update, Director Sena announced the departure of LESC senior policy analyst Tim Bedeaux for a position with the Thornburg Foundation and discussed the timeline for hiring a new policy analyst.