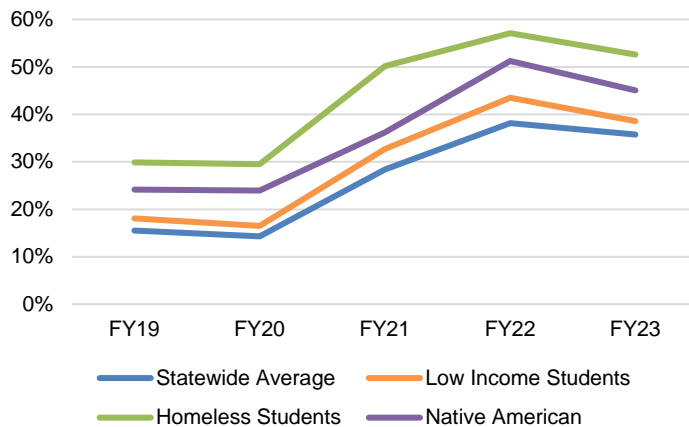


Topic Area: Student Attendance, Achievement, and Attainment

Math and reading test scores and high school graduation rates have long been predictors of future economic and social outcomes for students. However, New Mexico consistently ranks the lowest on these traditional measures of student achievement. Another key factor underpinning these metrics is student attendance, which fell sharply after school closures during the Covid-19 pandemic. There are several evidence-based options to improving the state’s dismal student outcomes and closing achievement gaps with at-risk youth, including increasing the quality and quantity of instructional time, recruiting and retaining high performing educators, and providing appropriate curriculum. In recent years, the state has enacted legislation and significantly increased appropriations in support of these objectives.

Key Data

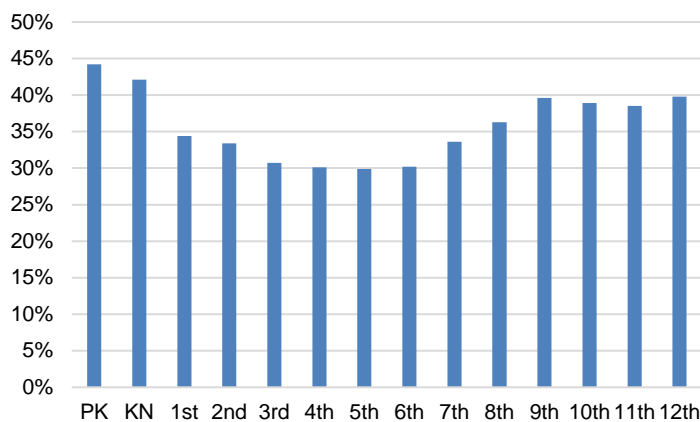
Student Chronic Absenteeism Rates



Source: LESC

- New Mexico’s chronic absenteeism rate, or the share of students missing 10 percent or more of school, doubled after the Covid-19 pandemic and remains at 35 percent.
- In New Mexico, about 7,500 students reported experiencing housing instability and the highest chronic absenteeism rates at 53 percent. Nationally, absenteeism rates are higher for students in shelters versus those doubled up with families.
- Leading drivers of absences include physical and mental illnesses, lack of transportation, housing instability, school safety concerns, and lack of connection to schools.
- The state has invested in community schools, school-based health centers, universal school meals, telehealth, school security, and extended learning time to increase access to school.

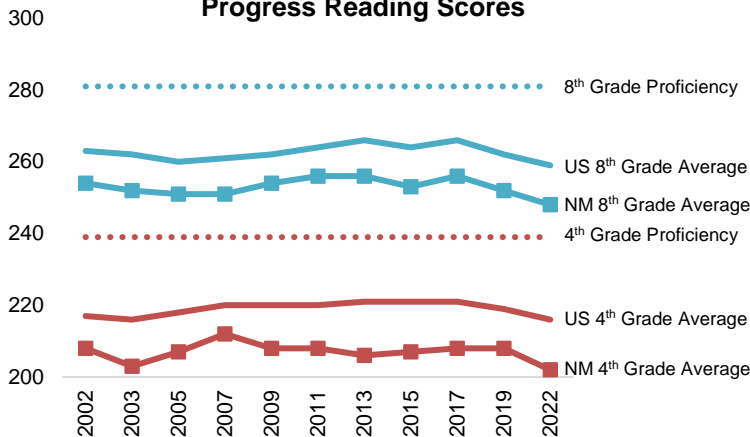
FY23 Chronic Absenteeism by Grade



Source: LESC

- Chronic absenteeism rates in New Mexico are highest in the early and later grade levels, with absenteeism rates hovering at 40 percent.
- LFC and national research shows chronic absenteeism affects all students, even those in school. Student absences decrease learning time, contribute to higher student dropout rates, and result in lower student achievement.
- Some evidence-based strategies to improve attendance include targeted transportation programs, immunization, ventilation upgrades, personalized family outreach, fair discipline practices, and relevant student coursework.
- Punitive approaches, such as suspensions for truancy, fines and jail time, or court diversion, do not show evidence of improving attendance.

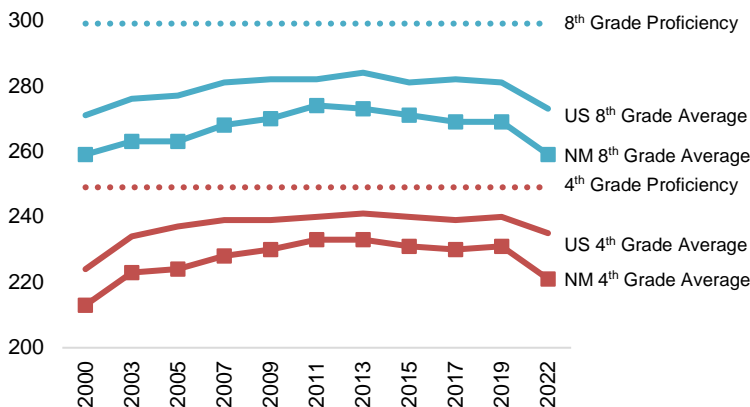
National Assessment of Education Progress Reading Scores



Source: USDE, NAEP

- In 2022, New Mexico ranked last in the nation on reading scores for fourth and eighth graders.
- Only about 20 percent of students in New Mexico were considered proficient in national reading scores. Massachusetts—one of the top performing states—only reported 40 percent proficiency in reading.
- Mississippi, which has seen recent rapid growth in reading scores, reports 31 percent proficiency for fourth grade and 22 percent proficiency for eighth grade.
- New Mexico is investing \$21.5 million to train educators on the science of reading and improve early literacy rates. While New Mexico is hiring coaches and training teachers, the state is not implementing other Mississippi policies, such as retention of third graders not demonstrating reading proficiency.

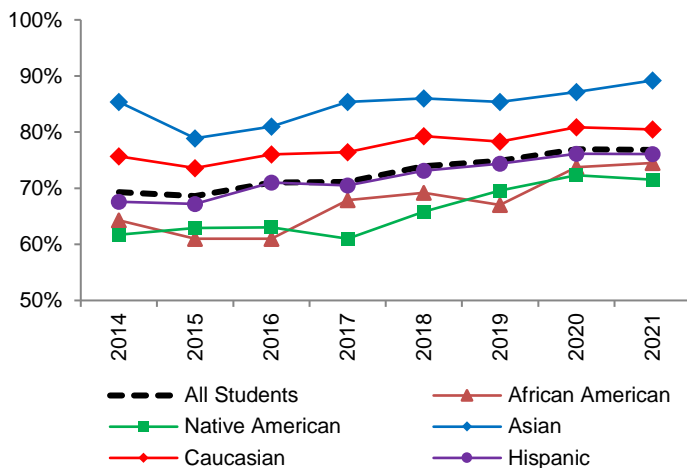
National Assessment of Education Progress Math Scores



Source: USDE, NAEP

- In 2022, New Mexico ranked last in the nation on math scores for fourth and eighth graders.
- Only 19 percent of fourth graders and 13 percent of eighth graders in New Mexico were considered proficient in national math scores.
- Massachusetts reported 43 percent proficiency for fourth graders and 35 percent proficiency for eighth graders. Mississippi reports 32 percent proficiency for fourth graders and 18 percent proficiency for eighth graders.
- New Mexico is investing \$8 million to provide support for science, technology, engineering, arts, and math programs, including \$5 million to improve math achievement using nonrecurring funds.
- Since 2010, New Mexico has used four different state standardized tests and paused testing for two years during school closures.

Four-Year High School Graduation Rates



Source: PED

- New Mexico's high school graduation rate in 2021 was 77 percent; the state has not reported a statewide rate for 2022.
- The U.S. high school graduation rate in 2020 was 87 percent. To reach the national graduation rate, New Mexico would need to graduate another 2,549 students.
- For 2020 and 2021, PED allowed school districts to locally determine competencies for graduation. Beginning in 2022, students may use other options beyond the state test to demonstrate competency for graduation, such as nationally recognized tests, portfolios, and career technical pathways.
- New Mexico is investing \$40 million into career technical education initiatives, which show evidence nationally of increasing student engagement, improving graduation rates, and creating pathways into the workforce.

Performance Challenge: Closing Achievement Gaps

LegisStat Recap

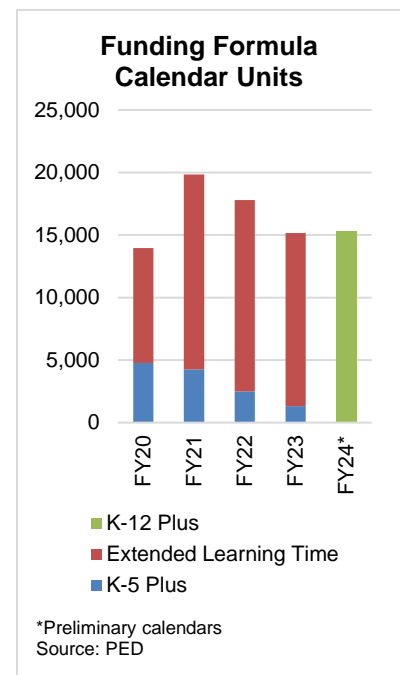
At the previous Public Education Department's (PED) LegisStat hearing on May 19, 2022, the committee asked how the department and schools were using interim assessment data to improve instruction in classrooms, why data collection and reporting was delayed, how New Mexico schools were performing relative to other states, why schools across the state were not using the same assessment, how PED was intervening in schools and students with low achievement or attendance, why schools were opting out of K-5 Plus and Extended Learning Time (ELT) programs, whether K-5 Plus or ELT programs worked, whether lower class sizes or quality of instruction would be a better investment to improve achievement, and whether PED had the appropriate level of authority to hold school districts accountable for results.

The PED secretary recommended statutory changes phasing out K-5 Plus and ELT programs and replacing the interventions with new instructional hour and day requirements. Additionally, PED suggested redoubling efforts to improve school leader competencies and expanding prekindergarten programs. The committee expressed interest in amending statutes to improve PED's oversight over schools and ensure schools spent funding on purposes intended by legislation.

Progress

Since the May 2022 LegisStat hearing, the state has replaced K-5 Plus and ELT programs with K-12 Plus programs, increased instructional hour requirements for all schools, and expanded early childhood funding, particularly for extended learning time in prekindergarten programs. The Legislature introduced but did not pass legislation changing control over PED from the governor to a state board of education.

The new law increased the instructional hour requirement for elementary and secondary schools to 1,140 hours but allowed up to 60 instructional hours in elementary schools and up to 30 instructional hours in secondary schools to be counted as professional work time for educators. The new law also included two new K-12 Plus factors in the school funding formula, providing incremental funding for each instructional day provided by a school beyond 180 days and a higher funding increment for days added beyond 190 days. Based on the preliminary data, schools proposed adding an average of two days to the calendar statewide, reaching 182.8 days for the upcoming 2023-2024 school year. While total school days are on track to increase, it is unclear what proportion of the new days are attributable to classroom time with students or professional work time for educators. As such, students in some schools may not receive more instructional time despite an increase in the number of school days.



Further, the governor appointed a new PED secretary to replace the outgoing secretary during the 2023 legislative session. And while PED has released FY22 state test scores and attendance rates, the department has not yet reported FY23 interim or summative test scores nor FY22 and FY23 high school graduation rates to the public. PED has recently updated its Vistas platform with FY22 data to provide individual school ratings online, which use attendance, achievement, and attainment data to generate a score. The department plans to release additional school data in August 2023 and roll out a new real-time data process called Nova to streamline data collection and reporting.

Out of the 852 public schools in the state, PED designated 218 schools as needing state support or intervention, with 31 schools in the more rigorous intervention classification. The department plans to provide professional

development and additional funding for these schools, particularly in the form of curriculum, training, and leadership development.

Suggested Questions

Accountability

- How will PED support schools with more rigorous intervention (MRI) designation differently than other schools with less severe designations?
- What happens if a school exits an intervention designation?
- Does PED have the capacity to provide technical assistance and support for 218 schools needing intervention?

K-12 Plus

- Will K-12 Plus be a requirement for low performing schools?
- What guidance is PED providing for low performing school districts or charter schools that are choosing to reduce days of student classroom instruction in FY24?
- How will the \$60 million public education reform fund appropriation for K-12 Plus be spent?

Data Reporting

- Why has PED not released interim test data for FY23 yet?
- How long does it take for test data to be collected and reported?
- What can the Legislature do to help the department modernize its data collection and reporting process?

Attendance

- What are the primarily reasons that students in New Mexico are missing school?
- How does PED use Attendance for Success Act improvement plans submitted by schools to address chronic absenteeism?
- What supports or interventions are provided to students who are excessively absent (20 percent absenteeism) from school?

Achievement and Attainment

- What percent of students (and which student demographic) are graduating high school using an option other than the state test?
- Why has PED not reported the 2021-2022 high school graduation rate yet?
- How does PED plan to close achievement gaps and raise performance in student math and reading test scores?