

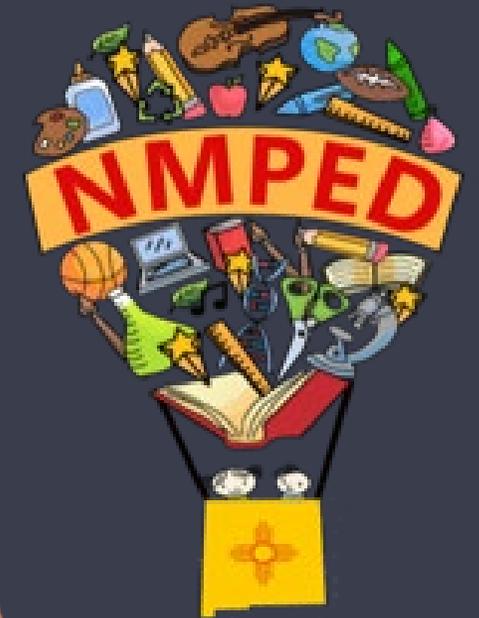
Presentation for the Legislative Education Study Committee

Office of Special Education

Dr. Margaret Cage, Deputy Cabinet Secretary,
Office of Special Education

November 15, 2024

Investing for tomorrow, delivering today.



*A Presentation by the
New Mexico Public
Education Department*

Executive Order 2023-062: Establishing the Office of Special Education within the Public Education Department



The Public Education Department (PED) will collaborate with key education stakeholders and state agencies to improve special education services and fulfill the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act's (IDEA's) intent – supporting students with disabilities from cradle to career.

In the 2022-2023 school year, over 16 percent of public school students qualified for special education services, calling for significant improvement in the quality of education provided to students with disabilities.

The state will establish consistent statewide standards and goals for special education and collect and report comprehensive data to inform evidence-based policies, processes, and programs that adequately serve students with disabilities.

[Executive Order 2023-062](#)

Components of the Executive Order



Investing for tomorrow, delivering today.



Creation of Office; Appointment of Director

Office of Special Education created within PED. Director hired by the PED Secretary as a direct report.



Duties of the Office of Special Education

Ensure accountability, promote inclusion, support staffing, address family needs, and secure resources to enhance special education across New Mexico.



Special Education Salary Differential Levels

Identify and study options, and make recommendations for salary differential levels, time allocations, and other supports for licensed school employees, educational assistants, and other instructional support providers by July 1, 2024.



Transfer of Preschool Special Education

Execute a formal written agreement that transfers the Part B-619 Coordinator to Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) by July 1, 2024.



Transition of Special Education Division

Office of Special Education to assume duties of the Division by July 1, 2024.

Revitalizing Special Education: A Comprehensive Approach to Systemic Change

Rebuilding Trust:

Engage families as partners, provide clear and transparent communication, and foster a culture of inclusivity and respect

Investment in the Workforce:

Provide ongoing professional development to ensure that all educators and service providers are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to provide high-quality special education services

Strengthening Accountability:

Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of special education programs and services, identify areas for improvement, and implement evidence-based practices and interventions

Fostering Inclusive Culture:

Ensure that students with disabilities have access to the same opportunities and experiences as their typically-developing peers

Structural Alignment:

Create a shared vision and mission for special education, develop clear and consistent policies and procedures, and implement a multi-tiered system of support across agencies

Empowering OSE Staff:

Provide ongoing training, access to resources and materials, support from experts, and collaboration opportunities to ensure that special education programs and services are implemented effectively and efficiently



OSE Strategic Priorities

In the pursuit of fostering equitable opportunities for students with disabilities in New Mexico, our strategic priorities are intricately woven around four core beliefs.



Data-Driven Goals for Equitable Opportunities

- Advocate for **equity** in education by addressing systematic barriers and disparities that hinder the academic, social, and emotional growth of students with disabilities.
- Champion policies and practices that promote **equitable access** to resources, opportunities, and support services, ensuring that every student has the foundation needed to succeed.



Culturally Responsive Education

- Create **rigorous learner-centered** options in every community.
- Affirm the belief that all students have the right to access **high-quality education** that meets their unique needs and aspirations.
- Prioritize **learner-centered** approaches that empower students with disabilities to take ownership of their educational journey and reach their full potential.



Profiles, Pathways, and Teaching

- Align **standards-based** curriculum, and transition support through profiles, pathways, and teaching.
- Recognize the importance of **collaboration** among all stakeholders, including students, families, educators, policymakers, and community members, in supporting the success of students.
- Foster a **unified approach** that values input from diverse perspectives and promotes shared decision-making to drive positive outcomes for all learners.



Professional Development

- Create a **diverse, inclusive, and highly-skilled** workforce.
- Promote the belief that **diversity** is a strength and every individual regardless of ability brings unique perspectives and talents to the table.
- Uphold **inclusive practices** that honor the diverse backgrounds, cultures, and identities of students with disabilities in New Mexico.

Outcome: Students with disabilities prepared for college, career, and community involvement.

Empowering the Special Education Workforce: Building a Stronger Special Education System

OSE Fellows Academy:

Enhance the leadership capacity of special education (SPED) directors in overseeing effective programs, structures, and protocols



OSE Leadership Academy:

Increase leadership's knowledge and skills in IDEA compliance and SPED structures and protocols



OSE Teacher Academy:

Increase the capacity, effectiveness, recruitment, and retention of SPED teachers



Develop and provide professional development:

Offer training to a variety of stakeholders on SPED topics and issues



Complete a comprehensive state action plan:

Use the strategic priorities of OSE as the foundation for targeted efforts towards continuous improvement in the provision of SPED services



Special Education Initiatives

- **Current Initiatives**

- Individual Education Program (IEP) Project
- Accountability and Compliance School Monitoring
- Salary Differentials
- Mentorship Academy
- Law Conference
- Professional Development
- Parent Resource Fair
- Huddle/Working Groups
- OSE State Plan

- **Future Initiatives**

- Native American Working Group
- Behavior Initiative with Autism Focus
- Policy Writing Workshops

- **Cradle to Career Indicator Improvement**

- Indicator 5: Percent of students with disabilities in general education classroom
- Indicator 7: Percent of preschool students with disabilities early literacy skills mastered
- Indicator 14: Percent of high school students transitioning to higher education or competitively employed

- **Stay in School Project**

- Attendance
- Interventions for failing grades
- Behavior
- Work study opportunities
- Job exploration opportunities
- Pilot outcomes: Overall 30 percent increase in graduation rates

Other Ongoing Initiatives

1. OSE IDEA Part B State monitoring
2. State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) data review
3. Contract updates
4. Accountability and compliance (e.g., data, budget, spending)
5. Outreach efforts (e.g., newsletters, stakeholder engagement meetings)

Office of Special Education Support for Families

OSE Parent and Community Liaison

- Direct support for parents of students in special education
- Discussing parent concerns
- Resources for students and families
- IEP questions and more!



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State Plan Overview

1. Executive Order 2023-062

- a. “Whereas, the State must develop and implement a plan to set consistent statewide standards and goals for special education, and collect and report comprehensive data to inform evidence-based policies, processes, and programs that adequately serve students with disabilities.”
- b. “Develop and annually update a state plan that establishes statewide special education standards and goals to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.”

2. The state plan was developed **based on research** and **best practices** from other state plans.

3. OSE **engaged stakeholders** through the Executive Huddle and other venues.

State Plan



New Mexico Office of Special Education
State Plan
2024-2027



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Supporting Documents

Half-pager: OSE mission, vision, goals, and priorities

New Mexico Office of Special Education

Vision

Every person in New Mexico, regardless of their abilities, is valued, respected, and provided with resources and opportunities to succeed through cradle, career, and life.

Mission

We achieve this vision through unwavering compassion, collaboration, and innovation by supporting school districts, charter schools, educators, families, and communities in fostering a supportive learning experience for all to thrive, learn, and achieve their full potential.

Goals



Maintain a diverse, inclusive, and highly skilled workforce: Diversity is a strength. Every individual brings talents to the table and contributes to a strong workforce of teachers, educational assistants, and other school-based staff.

Four-pager: OSE mission, vision, goals, and priorities, plus a deeper dive into the special education process and resources relevant to families



**Office of Special Education**

New Mexico Parent and Guardian Guide
Office of Special Education

Next Steps for the State Plan

Month	Next Steps
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share final state plan and documents with key stakeholders via website update, convenings, etc.
2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• June: Six-month check point.• June: Review data and propose any improvements to data components included in the annual report.• July: Submit first annual report.

Pay Differentials for Hard to Staff Special Education Positions

- The **Hard to Staff Pay Differential** initiative aims to offer financial incentives to **attract and retain certified special education teachers to positions that have been vacant**, difficult to fill, or have experienced high turnover.
- Funding is provided through **New Mexico House Bill 2** (General Appropriation Act of 2024).
- Local education agencies (LEAs) with vacant special education teacher positions.
 - All special education vacant positions that are filled will be available for funding.
 - ✓ Positions that have been vacant for **two or more** school years will be prioritized.
- **Up to \$5 million** (annually for three years) is provided for:
 - Phase I: Recruitment of certified special education teachers.
 - Phase II: Retention of certified special education teachers.
 - Phase III: Assisting with filling other special education vacancies including:
 - ✓ Educational assistants
 - ✓ Related service providers (e.g., SLP, OT, PT)

2024 Activities

Timeline	Activities
August 15 – September 30, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LEAs submit applications to OSE.
October – December 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Process Review and Payment<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ OSE reviews and processes applications.◦ LEAs confirm eligible teachers.◦ Disseminate first round of stipends to eligible teachers.• Retention Stipend Applications LEAs submit applications to OSE (November).

New Mexico Special Education Workforce

Table 2. Number and Characteristics of Special Education Teachers and Vacancies

	Special Education Teachers			
	All	Who meet licensure requirements	Who meet licensure requirements and work in a special education position	Vacancies
Total number	2001	1924	1393	232

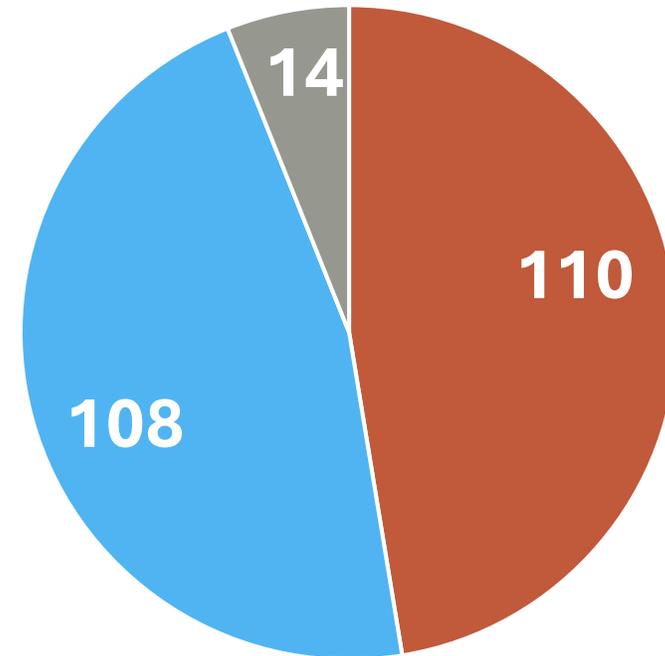
Table 3. Number of Other Special Education Staff and Vacancies

	Educational Assistants (EAs)		Related Service Providers (RSPs)	
	EAs	Vacancies	RSPs	Vacancies
Total number	2580	376	1533	160

Special Education Vacancies

Figure 1: Breakdown of Positions by Length of Vacancy

About half of the positions have been vacant for two or more years and most of the rest for less than two years (Figure 1).



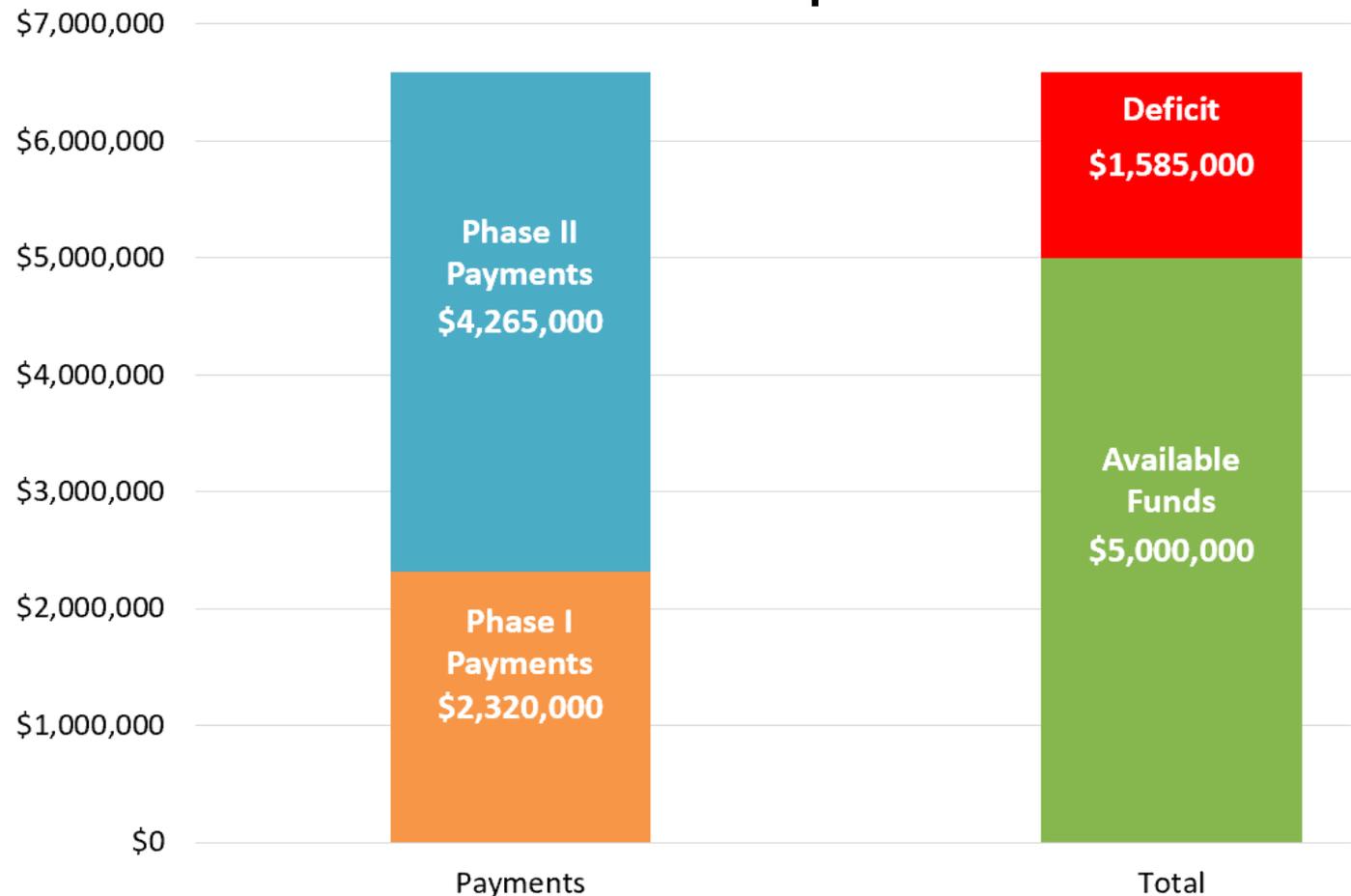
- For at least two years
- For less than two years
- Unknown

Stipend Projections

Assumptions for Payment Estimates

- Phase I Assumptions:
 - All teachers are eligible both semesters.
 - All eligible teachers receive \$5,000 each semester (total of \$10,000).
- Phase II Assumptions:
 - All teachers are eligible this year.
 - All eligible teachers receive \$5,000 total.

Figure 2. School Year 2024-2025 Payment Estimates Under the Assumptions



Lessons Learned

- The **funding** needed for the three phases of this initiative is almost certain to exceed available funding.
- **Data are preliminary** and need verification.
 - There is a need for **additional technical assistance** and training on the application process.
- We must consider the extent of LEAs' **autonomy**, which is based on union agreements.
- **Accountability measures** are needed to ensure that:
 - LEAs provide teachers with mentoring.
 - Administrators and stipend recipients actively engage in initiatives aimed at enhancing student performance and fostering positive outcomes for students with disabilities, as LEAs describe in their application.

Lessons Learned

- LEAs are **concerned that teachers will move across districts** to collect additional stipends suggesting a need to:
 - Inform LEAs that teachers can only receive the Phase I stipend once, not every time they move to a new vacant position.
 - Share best practices from the field and research that promote retention. For example:
 - ✓ Building a positive school culture and climate.
 - ✓ Training excellent leaders.
- Some LEAs did not apply out of a concern for disadvantaging general education or current special education teachers who are ineligible for a Phase I stipend, raising an **equity** issue.
- Legislators **can enhance clarity** and specificity in drafting bills, reducing ambiguity and ensuring laws are easily understood and effectively implemented.
- This comprehensive initiative necessitates expanding OSE's **capacity**, increasing the need for contractor support.

Next Steps

Estimated Timeline	Activities
February – March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Send retention letters of eligibility to LEAs.
March – April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct licensure verification for eligible special education teachers.
May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disseminate second round of stipends to eligible teachers.<li>• Disseminate stipends to eligible teachers.

Public School Support Request and Agency Budget

FY26 Public School Support Request

Special Education Initiatives	\$4 million
Special Education Universal Statewide IEP Electronic System	\$12 million
Special Education Stipends/Differentials (\$5 million/year thru FY27)	\$5 million

FY26 Agency Budget Request

Special Education Full Time Employees	\$2 million
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Thank You

For Questions

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Stipend Eligibility Criteria

Payments for Certified Special Education Teachers for School Year 2024-2025

- Participating teachers must hold a **special education teaching license** from the State of New Mexico.
- Payments will go directly to teachers to decrease future Maintenance of Effort (MOE) obligations of LEAs.
- **\$10,000 total for SY 2024-2025** divided into two \$5,000 payments disseminated at the end of each semester (December 2024 and May 2025).

December 2024 (\$5,000)

Participant must work **at least 75% of the instruction hours from August to December** (or first half of the year depending on when the school year begins) according to the instructional calendar of the district or charter school of employment.

May 2025 (\$5,000)

Participant must work **at least 75% of the instruction hours from January to May** (or when second half of the year resumes) according to the instructional calendar of the district or charter school of employment.

Summary of Information from Phase I Step 1 Applications

Fifty-six (56) LEAs submitted applications in Phase I Step 1 (Table 1).

Table 1. Submitting LEAs

LEAs that Submitted Applications in Phase I Step 1		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alamogordo Public Schools • Albuquerque Bilingual Academy • Albuquerque Public Schools • Aldo Leopold Charter School • Altura Preparatory School • Animas Public Schools • Aztec Municipal School District • Belen Consolidated Schools • Bloomfield Schools • Carlsbad Municipal Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrizozo Municipal Schools • Central Consolidated School District • Chama Valley Independent School District • Christine Duncan Heritage Academy • Cien Aguas International School • Cimarron Municipal Schools • Clovis Municipal Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cottonwood Classical Preparatory School • Cuba Independent School District • Deming Public Schools • Dexter Consolidated Schools • Dora Consolidated Schools • Grants-Cibola County Schools • Hagerman Municipal Schools • Hatch Valley Public Schools • Health Leadership High School • Hózhó Academy

Summary of Information from Phase I Step 1 Applications

Table 1 (continued). Submitting LEAs

LEAs that Submitted Applications in Phase I Step 1		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J. Paul Taylor Academy • Jemez Mountain Public Schools • Jemez Valley Public Schools • Las Cruces Public Schools • Las Montañas Charter School • Las Vegas City Schools • Los Alamos Public Schools • Loving Municipal Schools • Mark Armijo Academy • Mesa Vista Consolidated Schools • Mountainair Public Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native American Community Academy • New America School-New Mexico • Pecos Independent School District • Pojoaque Valley School District • Quemado Independent Schools • Rio Rancho Public Schools • Roswell Independent School District • Ruidoso Municipal Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Siembra Leadership High School • Silver Consolidated Schools • Socorro Consolidated Schools • Taos Academy • Taos Municipal Schools • Technology Leadership High School • Tucumcari Public Schools • Tularosa Municipal Schools • Vaughn Municipal Schools • Voz Collegiate Preparatory Charter School