



**Topic: Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools**

Nationally and globally, artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming how educators serve students and how students engage in learning. While AI tools have the potential to enhance teacher instruction and expand student learning, recent research shows AI poses risks in education, including diminished cognitive abilities for students, faulty student learning, and compromised student safety and privacy. Research also notes AI’s rapid development limits definitive statements regarding its risks and benefits. In 2025, the Legislature passed House Memorial 2 (HM2), an LESC-endorsed memorial, requesting LESC to convene an AI working group to study the technology and develop recommendations. The working group determined New Mexico’s approach to AI in education should establish a framework to promote equitable access to safe AI tools; guide effective implementation through oversight and professional development; protect student data and safety through clear legal safeguards; and modernize standard and assessment systems to prepare students for an AI-driven future. During the 2026 interim, LESC staff will conduct a landscape analysis to better understand how states across the U.S. are regulating AI in education to inform the Legislature’s development of an AI regulatory framework that promotes equitable student learning while protecting student’s safety and privacy.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	Overarching Systems

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **April to May 2026:** Conduct a landscape analysis of national trends in state’s regulation of AI in education.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Present policy brief to LESC in May 2026.

**Long-Term Goals**

- The Legislature understands AI use and its student impact in New Mexico schools.
- The Legislature’s policy framework supports student’s learning, protects student’s safety and data, preserves tribal data sovereignty, and fosters innovation.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
What is the role of the Legislature as school districts and charter schools use AI tools? What guidance does New Mexico provide school districts and charter schools using AI in the classroom? What is the role of other entities in the New Mexico education system? How do these separate, but connected, roles impact AI use in schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PED’s guidance and resources to support school districts and charter schools use AI in the classroom</li> </ul>
Are other states regulating AI in education? If so, how? What components emerge as critical to a state’s AI regulatory framework in education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education Commission of the States</li> <li>• National Conference of State Legislatures</li> <li>• U.S. Department of Education</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the Legislature better understands its role in regulating AI use in New Mexico schools and develops an appropriate regulatory framework, and the Public Education Department provides effective and precise guidance and support for schools to safely and successfully use AI tools, and School Districts and Charter Schools better understand how to use AI in the classroom then the State will better safeguard student’s safety and privacy while promoting student success and innovation; and New Mexico will see improved student engagement and outcomes.

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- National education organizations



**Topic: Access to Arts, Physical Education, and Libraries**

Ensuring students have access to music, art, library services, and physical education is important to create an engaging learning environment. These services can help promote a healthy lifestyle, encourage students to explore creative interests, and provide additional opportunities to develop skills in a variety of domains. In turn, schools may also be better able to manage teacher workload when they offer such educational experiences. During the 2026 interim, LESC staff intend to update lawmakers on the funding mechanisms in place to support these educational experiences, provide an analysis of the availability of programming across the state, and identify common barriers to access for students. These barriers may include personnel challenges, facility limitations, and inadequate funding.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	Overarching Systems

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **April 2026:** Analysis of STARS courses to assess arts and physical education options.
- **May 2026:** Interviews with schools on personnel, facilities, and funding needs.
- **April-June 2026:** Review of SEG factors, statute, administrative rule, and national research on the impact of arts, physical education, and library access on student outcomes and staff workloads.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Final brief presented in July 2026.

**Long-Term Goals**

- K-12 students have access to robust school libraries, fine arts, and physical education as part of their daily school routines.
- Fine arts and physical education teachers, along with librarians, are recognized as essential components of a well-rounded educational experience that supports student achievement and well-being.
- New Mexico sees reduced physical education and music education vacancies and falls within recommended librarian to student ratios in K-12 schools.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
How does New Mexico currently fund school libraries, fine arts education, and physical education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of the state equalization guarantee's relevant factors</li> <li>• Review of available state and federal grants</li> </ul>
How well does New Mexico's approach to funding these educational experiences meet demonstrated demand or need? How does the funding structure shape availability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of relevant statute and administrative rule</li> <li>• Interviews with schools on personnel, facility, funding realities</li> </ul>
Is access to these educational experiences even across and New Mexico and if not, what challenges or barriers are preventing this access?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State library data on school library distribution</li> <li>• SOAR educator vacancy report</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the **Legislature** provides correct funding for the hiring of qualified personnel and the purchasing of necessary resources for fine arts, physical education, and library services, and if **School Districts and Charter Schools** prioritize the inclusion of these services and activities as part of their regular school day, both through personnel and scheduling decisions, **then students** will have improved access to enriching educational experiences beyond the traditional core subjects, while teachers will have a more balanced workload and increased planning time.

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- New Mexico Art Education Association
- New Mexico State Library
- New Mexico Library Association
- New Mexico State University Southwest Outreach Academic Research Evaluation and Policy Center (SOAR)
- New Mexico Activities Association



**Topic Assessments and Accountability**

Assessments, accountability, and data systems are essential for the decision-making of lawmakers, local education agencies (LEAs), schools, and teachers. Lawmakers have expressed concerns that federal and state assessments do not adequately account for students’ learning conditions and lack a focus on student assets. In addition, there are concerns that some LEAs may be layering assessments that could be streamlined to preserve instructional time and improve coherence in how assessments are used. During the 2026 interim, LESL staff will provide an analysis of current assessment practices, including intervals, duration, and use of assessments to provide recommendations for future assessment structures. LESL staff will also examine how the Public Education Department (PED) has used assessment results to meet federal requirements to identify schools and students in need of support under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and how PED and LEAs have supported these schools and students.

LESL Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	<b>Overarching Systems</b>

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **May 2026:** Complete project scope, including scheduling LEA assessment audits and inventories.
- **Fall 2026:** Conduct LEA assessment audits and inventories to explore assessment landscape in various contexts; analyze and visualize data on assessments.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Final report presented to LESL in October 2026.

**Long-Term Goals**

- New Mexico’s assessment system is streamlined, meets federal requirements, and identifies students and schools in need of support, with minimal impact on instructional time.
- New Mexico’s system of assessments provides teachers with timely, actionable data to better inform classroom instruction.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
What does the assessment landscape currently look like across New Mexico, including formative, interim, and summative assessments? How much time are students spending taking assessments in various LEAs across New Mexico?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal and state assessment requirements</li> <li>• LEA assessment audits and inventories</li> </ul>
What do LEA assessment audits and inventories reveal regarding opportunities to streamline screeners, diagnostics, and interim and local assessments? What is the evidence of quality and instructional utility behind each assessment? How does each assessment align with teaching, learning, and High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LEA assessment audits and inventories</li> <li>• Education First “Rethinking the Test Pile” methodology</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the Legislature better understands the statutory framework for assessments and directs changes as needed to support student learning and teacher practice and the Public Education Department supports LEAs to streamline assessments and School Districts and Charter Schools implement assessments with fidelity, then teachers will have the information they need to target instruction; proficiency scores will improve; and student outcomes will improve.

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- Local education agencies (LEAs)
- Schools with different student proficiency levels for case studies/interviews
- Education First



**Topic: Bilingual Education Study**

In SY25, 188 school districts and charters schools operated a total of 525 Bilingual Multicultural Education Programs (BMEP); using one of five available models: dual language, immersion, enrichment, heritage, maintenance, and transitional. While bilingualism is recognized as one important factor in promoting academic achievement, previous stakeholder feedback has indicated insufficient guidance and support often delays the establishment of an effective bilingual education model in New Mexico schools. LES C staff will convene a working group consisting of bilingual educators, bilingual education coordinators, higher education faculty and staff, tribal language experts, and state leaders to understand the constraints and affordances of each bilingual model to ensure adequate funding and resources are accessible for producing and prioritizing bilingualism and biliteracy.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	Overarching Systems

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **April 2026:** Finalize working group materials, participants, questions, locations.
- **May 2026 - August 2026:** Bilingual Education Working Group virtual and in-person meetings.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Final report delivered to LES C in October 2026.

**Long-Term Goals**

- Accurately determine the costs, structures, staffing needs, and framework to enhance dual language preparation for educators and education leaders.
- Determine instructional models and materials that produce the skills and evidence for language proficiency and acquisition.
- New Mexico’s approach to language and culture will enhance student belonging by promoting equitable opportunities for identity development and academic achievement.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
What components of an effective BMEP model enable students to achieve bilingual fluency and proficiency?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bilingual Education Working Group</li> <li>• HQIM inventory from PED</li> <li>• Bilingual program cost index from PED</li> </ul>
What data systems or evidence capture language fluency and proficiency?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student participation data</li> <li>• Bilingual state seal data</li> </ul>
Can existing revenue sources produce and sustain a high-quality dual language program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bilingual program units</li> <li>• Instructional materials costs</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

**If the Legislature** maintains funding for dual language programs **and the Public Education Department** establishes guidelines and requirements for dual language proficiency, instructional materials, and teacher preparation for dual language programs **and School Districts and Charter Schools** implement dual language programs and collect student participatory and academic data **then** dual language programs can create an immersive environment for student identity and language development; **and** dual language students will develop stronger skills and achieve higher academic achievement.

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- Higher Education Department (HED)
- Tribal Education Directors
- Bilingual educators



**Topic: School Infrastructure**

During the 2025 legislative session, the Legislature enacted Laws 2025, Chapter 16 (Senate Bill 82), making two key changes: 1) extending reduced local match requirements for school districts undertaking infrastructure projects through FY27; and 2) broadening eligibility for local match waivers through the Public School Capital Outlay Council (PSCOC). During the 2025 interim, LESC and Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) staff collaborated to begin to study the state and local match (“Phase II”) formula to better understand previously identified issues and identify potential paths forward. In the 2026 interim, LESC and LFC will continue working alongside key partners, including the Public School Facilities Authority (PSFA) and local education agencies (LEAs), to analyze critical elements of the formula such as the assumed cost per square foot for construction, the alignment between project timelines and LEAs’ ability to generate local revenue, and the role and impact of local match reductions and waivers. The continued high demand for waiver requests from school districts indicates a need to revise the current formula or consider a new approach, and LESC staff, in collaboration with partners, will continue advancing long-term, equitable reforms that better align local match requirements with districts’ fiscal capacity, construct safe and adequate facilities, and reduce reliance on waivers. The Public School Capital Outlay Task Force has directed LESC and LFC staff to develop potential legislative solutions during the 2026 interim for consideration in the 2027 legislative session.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	<b>Overarching Systems</b>

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **May to June 2026:** Convene LEA and partner working groups to gather input and discuss key issues.
- **May to June 2026:** Research and analyze construction cost trends, indices, and methodologies for accurately incorporating costs into the formula.
- **July to August 2026:** Evaluate additional factors identified by LEAs and partners, including a review of current local match reduction methodologies and comparison to alternative approaches.
- **September to October 2026:** Analyze policies and strategies to control construction costs and ensure projects remain on schedule.
- **October to November 2026:** Synthesize findings, finalize recommendations, and complete project.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Joint LFC and LESC final report presented to LESC in November 2026.

**Long-Term Goals**

- Strengthen communication with LEAs and partners while monitoring school facility construction, state/local match calculations, and waiver activity to assess whether the current formula is adequately supporting facility needs.
- Reduce reliance on waiver requests and use project completion data to evaluate whether facilities in need are being repaired or replaced, and whether changes adopted during the 2027 legislative session are improving school infrastructure outcomes.
- Establish and implement a sustainable state and local match formula which enables timely project delivery, effective use of PSCOC programs, alignment with LEAs’ local revenue capacity to support long-term facility needs and reflects the state’s ability to support school facility construction and repair.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
How can construction costs be better reflected in the phase II formula to align with the actual cost to replace schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer Price Index data</li> <li>• Local and national construction cost data</li> <li>• Methodology used in other states</li> </ul>
Are there any other local factors impacting school infrastructure affordability and the construction of school infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from LEAs</li> <li>• Collaboration with PED</li> </ul>



<p>Should local match reductions be extended on a long-term basis and what is the best way to ensure they are allocated appropriately?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project cost data</li> <li>• Calculated local matches</li> <li>• Bonding capacity</li> <li>• Review calculation methods used by other agencies or other states</li> </ul>
<p>Are there policies necessary to provide project cost control and maintain project timelines?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PSFA Feedback</li> <li>• Methodology used in other states</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

**If the Legislature** implements a refined state and local match formula which accurately reflects the costs of replacing or repairing public school facilities, the capacity of local education agencies to raise revenue for infrastructure, and the state’s ability to offset funding gaps; and **if the Public School Capital Outlay Council** successfully implements these changes along with policies to control construction costs and keep projects on schedule, and **if School Districts and Charter Schools** are able to meet their calculated local match and complete projects within established budgets and timelines; **then** needed school infrastructure will be constructed or repaired, students will have safe and effective facilities that support a quality education, the state can sustainably fund school infrastructure, and the public school capital outlay system will align with New Mexico’s constitutional obligations.

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- Legislative Finance Committee
- Public School Facilities Authority
- Local education agency working group



**Topic: Sustainable and Adequate Career and Technical Education Funding**

The Legislature has prioritized career-connected learning, including career and technical education (CTE), since 2019 to engage secondary students, innovate academic design, and support the state’s economy. In the 2023-2024 school year (SY24), New Mexico had approximately 89 thousand CTE student participants, with 84 percent of enrolled students identified as individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Despite the Legislature’s investments, LESC engagement with the CTE working group, composed of school leaders, in 2025 found the state’s traditional funding mechanism for CTE did not fully capture the costs to develop and sustain CTE programs. Subsequently in 2025, LESC research found schools with high CTE student enrollment spent approximately \$905 more per student compared with other high schools. LESC recommended the Legislature consider a categorical funding mechanism to better capture costs and incentivize high-quality, industry aligned CTE programs. As the Legislature continues investing in career-connected learning and the Next Gen Pilot expires in 2026, LESC staff will continue refining a categorical funding mechanism, which would consider the programs’ diversity, complexity, and numerous costs to ensure programs are sustainably and adequately funded.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	Overarching Systems

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **April to May 2026:** Re-engage with CTE working group and other stakeholders.
- **July 2026:** Analyze available financial and student data.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Policy brief presented to the committee in July 2026, which will include a categorical funding proposal.

**Long-Term Goals**

- Develop a deeper understanding of CTE student participation, outcomes and program costs.
- Ensure students have access to high-quality, industry-aligned CTE programs that offer robust applied learning opportunities while enriching students’ foundational academic skills.
- Allocate funding and other resources precisely to sustain and expand industry-aligned CTE programs statewide.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
Which students are participating in CTE programs? What student outcomes do these programs produce?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School and student data</li> </ul>
What statutory components of a codified CTE program should be in place to ensure access to equitable, robust CTE programs statewide?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National research</li> </ul>
How might a categorical funding formula impact local education agency administration of CTE programs, student access, and student outcomes in CTE programs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National research</li> <li>• CTE Working Group</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the Legislature better understands its investments in CTE programs and strategically funds them, and the Public Education Department funds robust industry-aligned programs and supports education leaders, and School Districts and Charter Schools design academically rigorous, industry-aligned, cohesive, and comprehensive CTE programs tailored to their local context, then the State will have a strategy to offer robust, differentiated CTE programs; and New Mexico will see improved student engagement and outcomes resulting in college, career, and civic readiness.

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- Higher Education Department (HED)
- School districts, charter schools, and teachers
- CTE organizations





**Topic: Distance Learning**

While distance learning programs are a common instructional model in school districts and charter schools throughout New Mexico, the state does not have an adequate understanding of which students are enrolled in these programs, where those programs are, how well they are serving students, and which external entities are being contracted to provide those programs. During the 2026 legislative session, the Legislature passed Laws 2026, Chapter 8 (House Bill 253), which established the first statutory framework for distance learning programs since the creation of the Cyber Academy Act in 2007. The bill created reporting requirements for distance learning students, changed the way the public school funding formula accounts for those students, and required distance learning programs to comply with the Public School Code. However, because there is still a need for the Legislature to better understand the range of distance learning programs, the characteristics of students, the instructional models they use in serving students, and the costs of providing those programs, House Bill 253 also requires LESC to lead a collaborative study of distance learning programs throughout the state during the 2026 interim.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	Overarching Systems

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **March 2026:** Receive certified data of distance learning students by school district and charter school from PED and final funded run for FY26.
- **May 2026:** Deliver preliminary overview of distance learning programs to LESC.
- **October 2026:** Receive FY27 preliminary funded run, SY26 assessment data, and first 40-day MEM of distance learning students.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Preliminary overview of distance learning to LESC in May, and final report and recommendations to LESC in November.

**Long-Term Goals**

- Improve understanding of distance learning programs in New Mexico, student outcomes based on instructional models, and how to more responsively support distance learning programs in the public school funding formula.
- Ensure distance learning programs are complying with the Public School Code and that they are adequately meeting the needs of their students.
- Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of distance learning programs and monitor the continued evolution of those programs in New Mexico.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
How many students are enrolled in distance learning programs, what type of programmatic models are they enrolled in, and are there external parties involved in providing or managing those programs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FY26 final funded run</li> <li>• FY27 preliminary funded run</li> <li>• FY27 40-day MEM</li> </ul>
How do distance learning students, particularly those in kindergarten through fifth grade, perform compared to traditional in-person students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SY26 assessment data</li> </ul>
Are there differences in the costs of serving distance learning students? If so, should the public school funding formula account for those differences in cost?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operating Budget Management System</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the Legislature provides statutory guardrails and responsive funding for distance learning programs and the Public Education Department continuously evaluates distance learning programs for compliance with the Public School Code and School Districts and Charter Schools develop comprehensive and rigorous approaches to supporting distance learning students, then school districts and charter schools will be better able to provide distance learning students with access to a responsive and adequate public education.

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- Legislative Finance Committee
- School districts and charter schools





**Topic: Educator Career Continuum**

The *Martinez-Yazzie* education sufficiency lawsuit ruled highly effective teachers are key to improving the proficiency of at-risk students. However, [data](#) shows New Mexico’s teacher workforce is becoming less experienced, suggesting the state may be struggling to retain experienced teachers. Schools also face high teacher [turnover rates](#), which negatively impacts student outcomes. Experienced New Mexico teachers have few options for career advancement and compensation growth. While the Legislature raised teacher salary minimums in recent years—an important recruitment strategy—resulting salary compaction may negatively impact retention. High performing education systems have educator career continuums comprised of multiple advancement pathways, including instructional leadership that allow teachers to deepen expertise while remaining in the classroom. In these systems, career progression is tied to demonstrated skills, expanded responsibilities, and compensation. The result is an educator career continuum that strengthens instructional quality, elevates the profession, and improves teacher retention by making teaching a sustainable, long-term career.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	Overarching Systems

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **July 2026:** Conduct research on the features of teacher career advancement in high-performing education systems.
- **August 2026:** Gather input from education partners.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Report presented to LESL in fall 2026.

**Long-Term Goals**

- Teacher retention improves as teachers progress through multiple advancement pathways with increased compensation.
- New and struggling teachers are supported by expert teachers with demonstrated effectiveness.
- Teacher recruitment improves as teaching in New Mexico is viewed as a profession with opportunities for advancement, recognition, and expanded impact.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
How do advancement pathways and roles effectively recognize and extend teacher expertise while improving teacher retention, instructional quality, and student outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with state and national education partners</li> </ul>
How should advancement criteria, evaluation, and compensation be structured to fairly and reliably identify and recognize expertise and responsibilities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with state and national education partners</li> <li>• Lessons from innovative staffing pilots in New Mexico</li> </ul>
What system conditions are necessary to implement an educator career continuum that improves teacher retention and instructional quality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with state and national education partners</li> <li>• SY26 school personnel data</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the **Legislature** works with partners to design a more effective educator career continuum, and the **Public Education Department** develops a network of instructional leaders with demonstrated effectiveness, and **School Districts and Charter Schools** identify and connect new and struggling teachers with these instructional leaders, **then highly-effective teachers** will be able to progress in their careers without leaving the classroom setting, **and teachers** will have greater access to job-embedded professional development facilitated by teachers with demonstrated effectiveness.

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- School districts, including teachers
- Teachers’ unions
- Educator preparation programs
- Learning Policy Institute
- Legislative Finance Committee (LFC)



**Topic: Educator Workforce Analysis**

A wealth of [research](#) demonstrates teachers are the most important school-related factor impacting student achievement, followed by principals. To ensure the distribution of educators aligns with student and school needs, policymakers need timely and reliable workforce data. In the 2024-2025 school year (SY25), the Public Education Department (PED) began collecting real-time personnel vacancy data from schools. This information has the potential to provide legislators with a more detailed and accurate picture of school vacancies than was previously available. LESC staff will analyze teacher vacancies, principal vacancies, and turnover rates to provide the Legislature a better understanding of which teachers and principals are serving which students and develop budget and policy considerations that strengthen the educator workforce, improve educator retention, and promote high-quality instruction for all students.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
<b>Educator Ecosystem</b>	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	Overarching Systems

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **April 2026:** Analyze Nova data.
- **May 2026:** Perform background research and consider policy solutions.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Final report presented to LESC in summer 2026.

**Long-Term Goals**

- Policymakers have educator workforce data that is timely, comprehensive, and disaggregated.
- New Mexico implements data-informed and evidence-based recruitment and retention strategies.
- Students across the state are consistently served by teachers and principals with the credentials, skills, and experience they need.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
How are teachers and principals distributed across schools in New Mexico, and what are the relationships between teacher characteristics (ex. ethnicity, licensure level, years of experience, etc.) and school-level factors (student demographics, rurality, etc.)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nova workforce data</li> </ul>
Which types of educators are needed and where? Where are students being taught by long-term substitute teachers or teachers with emergency credentials?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nova workforce data</li> </ul>
How does turnover vary among teachers and principals by teacher- and school-level characteristics?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nova workforce data</li> </ul>
How can schools, PED, and the Legislature use this information to develop more strategic approaches to recruit and retain teachers and principals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research on local and national best practices, as well as engagement with local and national education partners</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the **Legislature** has timely and comprehensive information on the educator workforce and uses that information to make strategic investments to strengthen the workforce, and the **Public Education Department** and **School Districts and Charter Schools** partner with the Legislature to support implementation of data-driven policy solutions, **then schools** will be able to attract and retain the educators they need, **and students** will be served by teachers and principals with the credentials, skills, and experience they need to succeed.

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- Educator Preparation Programs
- Teachers’ unions
- Learning Policy Institute
- Legislative Finance Committee (LFC)



**Topic: Statewide Education Governance and Long-Term Planning**

Education governance and long-term planning are essential to ensuring coherence, continuity, and effectiveness across New Mexico’s education system. While multiple strategic plans and initiatives exist to support and foster New Mexico’s education system, LESC analysis has previously found there is limited alignment in implementation, which can lead to unclear roles, fragmented decision-making, and inconsistent progress toward shared goals. Additionally, the state’s responsibilities related to the *Martinez-Yazzie* consolidated education sufficiency lawsuit require a sustained and coordinated approach to improving outcomes for students, working conditions for educators, and the ability of the state’s education system to serve all students. However, current governance structures may not fully support long-term planning, cross-agency alignment, or continuity over longer time horizons. House Memorial 30 (HM30) from the 2026 legislative session requests LESC to conduct a study of New Mexico’s education governance structures and examine national models of long-term educational planning. The memorial is intended to inform recommendations on potential governance structures, including assessing the potential feasibility, purpose, and design of a possible statewide education commission.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	<b>Overarching Systems</b>

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **April - May 2026:** Complete project planning and design/cadence of working group.
- **Summer - Fall 2026:** Conduct working group meetings and engage in stakeholder engagement; Conduct research and data on governance structures, statutory frameworks, and existing strategic plans.
- **Fall 2026:** Analyze findings in conjunction with working group including national models and state-specific considerations; develop recommendations.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Final report presented to LESC in November 2026.

**Long-Term Goals**

- New Mexico’s education system has a coherent governance structure with clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms.
- The state implements a sustainable, long-term vision for education.
- Governance structures support effective implementation of education planning, including a response to the *Martinez-Yazzie* ruling, as well as other components of the state’s education system.
- New Mexico’s education system demonstrates improved coordination, planning capacity, and ultimately, positive outcomes for students and educators.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
What does the current governance structure look like across New Mexico’s education system, including the roles and responsibilities of state agencies, local education agencies (LEAs), and other entities? How do these structures support or hinder coordination, accountability, and long-term educational planning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Mexico statutes governing education systems and agency roles</li> </ul>
What do existing strategic plans and frameworks reveal about alignment, coherence, and gaps in New Mexico’s approach to long-term educational planning? Where are there overlapping goals, and where are there disconnects in implementation across agencies and systems?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing strategic plans and frameworks</li> </ul>
What do governance models look like in other states? What are the common features of these models, including the role of statewide commissions or similar structures, and how might these models be adapted to New Mexico’s context?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National research and examples of governance and long-term planning models (for example, Maryland, and other states)</li> </ul>
What are the potential benefits, challenges, and feasibility considerations of establishing a statewide education commission in New Mexico? What statutory, fiscal, and staffing changes would be required?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiscal and staffing information related to potential governance structures</li> </ul>



### Theory of Change for Initiative

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**If the Legislature** better understands the current governance of New Mexico's education system and directs changes (as needed) to improve system alignment and long-term educational planning **and the Public Education Department and other state agencies** partner effectively and coordinate implementation within a coherent governance framework, **and education partners statewide** are engaged in the development of a long-term, shared statewide vision that includes agreed upon metrics and responsibilities, **then** the education system will operate with greater coherence and continuity, roles and responsibilities will be clearer; long-term planning will be strengthened; and student outcomes, as well as school conditions for educators and system health, will improve.

### Partners

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- Public Education Department
- Legislative Finance Committee
- Early Childhood Education and Care Department
- Higher Education Department
- Indian Affairs Department
- New Mexico Children's Cabinet
- Local education agencies (LEAs)
- Public school educators and school leaders
- Governments of tribes, nations, and pueblos
- Community, research, and nonprofit organizations with expertise in education and systems design
- National Conference of State Legislatures
- National Center on Education and the Economy
- Other states with education commissions or similar structures



**Topic: Healthcare Insurance**

The rising costs of healthcare have placed an increasing burden on public school employees, school districts and charter schools, and the New Mexico Public Schools Insurance Authority (NMPSIA). During the 2026 legislative session, the Legislature responded to these rising costs by passing Laws 2026, Chapter 52 (House Bill 47), which requires Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) to consolidate its health insurance program with NMPSIA. Implementing this consolidation will require significant collaboration between NMPSIA, APS, the Public Education Department (PED), and the Legislature. However, as the costs of healthcare continue to rise, it is also necessary to assess how consolidation will impact public school employees, how NMPSIA will approach future cost containment after consolidation, how the Legislature can adequately address future cost increases in premiums, and whether there are opportunities to achieve economies of scale through further consolidation of public employee insurance programs.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	<b>Overarching Systems</b>

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **May 2026:** Begin collaboration with NMPSIA, APS, LFC, HCA, and PED on consolidation of NMPSIA and APS, as well as considerations for further consolidations of programs.
- **July 2026:** Receive actuarial projections from NMPSIA and APS.
- **September 2026:** Deliver report to LESC, the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC), and the Executive.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Report detailing implementation considerations for the consolidation of NMPSIA and APS health insurance programs and other considerations regarding future sustainability of public employee insurance programs.

**Long-Term Goals**

- Ensure public school employees have access to responsive and affordable health insurance.
- Ensure insurance programs for public school employees are financially sustainable for school districts, charter schools, and the state.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
How will the consolidation of insurance programs at NMPSIA and APS impact costs and access for all public school employees?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actuarial projections from NMPSIA and APS</li> </ul>
Are there opportunities to achieve greater economies of scale by further consolidating group health insurance programs for public employees?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actuarial projections from NMPSIA and the Health Care Authority</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the Legislature requires state entities to pursue cost-containment strategies for public employee health insurance programs through the consolidation of existing programs and **School Districts and Charter Schools** collaborate with state entities in addressing potential considerations for those consolidations, then **School Districts and Charter Schools** will be better able to provide affordable, responsive, and fiscally sustainable health care coverage for all public school employees.

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- Legislative Finance Committee (LFC)
- Albuquerque Public Schools (APS)
- Health Care Authority (HCA)



**Topic: Indian Education Fund Update**

The Public Education Department (PED) amended administrative rule relating to New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) 6.35.2, the Indian Education Act, to update tribal consultation provisions and to establish an allocation-based award, as well as a competitive award, program for New Mexico’s pueblos, tribes, and nations. The amendments also removed application requirements and prevented funding revisions at the end of each fiscal year. A total of \$30 million was appropriated to the Indian education fund (IEF) for FY25, of which \$750 thousand was designated for PED’s Indian Education Division (IED) operations, \$23.4 million was distributed to pueblos, tribes, and nations, and \$5.85 million was distributed to eligible school districts and charter schools. The Indian education fund was established to advance Native American student outcomes by implementing culturally and linguistically responsive education systems; and LESC will work with IED to get updates on programs and initiatives that support Native American student success.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	Overarching Systems

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **March 2026:** Meeting with PED to discuss funding initiatives and purposes related to the IEF.
- **April 2026:** Follow up with PED with research questions and discuss education programs initiated in FY25 for Native American students.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Final brief presented to LESC in May 2026.

**Long-Term Goals**

- IED will have initiated education programs that promote and preserve Indigenous language, culture, and history.
- IED will be funding programs that obtain data on student outcomes, program evaluation, and budget requests.
- New Mexico students will have access to Indigenous-led education programs in language, culture, and history that is rigorous and locally informed.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
What programs and initiatives were funded through the IEF?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with PED</li> </ul>
What progress has been in determining the effectiveness of IEF funded programs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocation awarded to school district and charter schools since FY24</li> </ul>
How has IED ensured the programs and initiatives funded will be sustained beyond FY28?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IEF grant applications</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the Legislature continues funding education services and initiatives for tribes, pueblos, and nations and the Public Education Department provides guidance to sustain culturally relevant learning environments and School Districts and Charter Schools partners with tribal nations to promote culturally and linguistically relevant educational opportunities and instructional materials then tribes, pueblos, and nations can preserve language and cultural identity; and Indigenous students will have support for college and career readiness.

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- Tribal Education Departments



**Topic: Literacy Implementation**

Although New Mexico has made considerable gains in elementary reading proficiency through its structured literacy initiative, implementation varies across the state, and previous LESC research has noted increased coordination of efforts to address implementation gaps could be beneficial. During the 2026 legislative session, lawmakers passed legislation creating the High Quality Literacy Instruction Act, which amends existing law to ensure educator preparation programs (EPPs) teach preservice educators evidence-based approaches for biliteracy and English learners, among other requirements. The legislation also requires PED to adopt a literacy assessment system to begin in the 2027-2028 school year for kindergarten through third-grade students. In the 2026 and 2027 interims, LESC staff will monitor implementation of Laws 2026, Chapter 54 (Senate Bill 37), with particular focus in 2026 on the impact to educator preparation programs (EPPs) and to teacher training and practice.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	Overarching Systems

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **April 2026:** Complete project scoping, including scheduling meetings with EPPs, PED, and local education agencies (LEAs).
- **July 2026:** Meet with EPPs, PED, and a representative sample of LEAs.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Panel presentation with EPPs, LEAs, and PED along with staff brief presented to committee in September 2026; Report presented to committee November 2027 on impacts of Laws 2026, Chapter 54 for SY28.

**Long-Term Goals**

- New Mexico EPPs will leverage evidence-based practices to support English learners and students in bilingual and dual language programs.
- Teachers who teach reading and site administrators will be trained in how to use evidence-based practices for English learners, biliteracy, differentiation, and culturally and linguistically responsive instruction.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
How are EPPs teaching preservice educators evidence-based practice for literacy instruction for English learners, including instructional models that develop literacy in English and the students’ home languages?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with EPPs</li> </ul>
How are teachers who teach reading and site administrators being trained in how to use evidence-based practices for English learners, biliteracy, differentiation, and culturally and linguistically responsive instruction?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with LEAs and PED</li> </ul>
How can New Mexico align assessment policy with instructional strategy and HQIM, and consolidate rather than layer new testing requirements, while moving toward ongoing system design?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research/national engagement with organizations such as NCSL, ECS, LPI</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the Legislature codifies a high quality literacy instruction framework and the Public Education Department chooses an early literacy assessment system that provides timely and actionable results for teachers and students that can be implemented with minimal impact to instructional time and School Districts and Charter Schools implement with fidelity, then teachers will have timely, actionable assessment data to inform their practice; parents will better understand their students’ learning and progress; and student learning will improve; and student proficiency will improve.

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- Educator preparation programs (EPPs)
- Representative sample of local education agencies (LEAs)
- National organizations such as the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), Education Commission of the States (ECS), and the Learning Policy Institute (LPI)





**Topic: Long-Term Strategic Resource Management**

Long-term trends, such as declining student enrollment and increasing costs in serving student needs, pose challenges for school districts and charter schools. While the Legislature has significantly invested in addressing these challenges, there is not a strong understanding of how those additional resources have been used, and whether there are areas where inadequate funding continues to adversely impact student outcomes. It is also unclear whether existing strategic planning tools, such as the educational and facility master plans, are actively contributing to long-term planning at the local level, and whether the Public Education Department (PED) has the capacity to adequately support school districts and charter schools in using those tools to make informed and intentional decisions. As public schools continue to face challenges, it is necessary to assess whether school districts and charter schools are receiving adequate funding in the public school funding formula, whether they are using their existing resources in alignment with long-term strategic goals, and whether there are opportunities to increase PED's capacity to support local strategic planning.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	Overarching Systems

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **May 2026:** Complete interviews with PED, school districts, and charter schools, and complete preliminary assessment of local expenditures.
- **July 2026:** Preliminary FY27 funded run will be received by LESC staff.
- **July - August 2026:** Working group is assembled and completed.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Final report due to LESC in September, 2026.

**Long-Term Goals**

- Identify how school districts and charter schools develop local priorities, how they use those priorities to inform their budgets, and how those budgets evolve to changes in local conditions.
- Build reciprocally informative long-term planning tools that inform the legislative process and assist school districts and charter schools in effectively managing their resources.
- Develop PED's capacity to adequately support school districts and charter schools in strategically managing their resources.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
How do school boards and governing councils establish local priorities, and how do they use their different sources of funding to achieve sustainable and measurable progress toward achieving their goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with PED and school staff.</li> <li>• OBMS expenditure data.</li> </ul>
Are there areas of local budgets where revenues and expenditures consistently deviate from prior expectations, and if so, what are the contributing factors for those deviations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FY27 preliminary funded run</li> <li>• OBMS expenditure data.</li> </ul>
What long-term strategies are school districts and charter schools using in planning their instructional and staffing models and how does PED support the intentional use of resources to improve student outcomes over several years?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ed Plans.</li> <li>• Facility master plans.</li> <li>• Local needs assessments</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the Legislature invests adequate funding in public schools and establishes a responsive framework for long-term strategic planning at the local level and the **Public Education Department** has the capacity to support school districts and charter schools in strategically managing their resources and **School Districts and Charter Schools** have the capacity to develop long-term plans for improving student outcomes **then the state** can make sustainable and intentional progress toward improving student outcomes.

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- Legislative Finance Committee
- School districts and charter schools



**Topic: Math Legislation Implementation**

Only one in four students are proficient in math in New Mexico, with even lower proficiency rates for students with disabilities, students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and English learners. In the consolidated *Martinez-Yazzie* education sufficiency lawsuit, the court pointed to low proficiency rates in math overall, as well as the persistent achievement gaps between student groups, as part of evidence the state violated students’ fundamental rights. In the 2026 legislative session, lawmakers passed legislation that creates a statewide framework to address mathematics instruction by increasing teacher preparation requirements, in addition to other measures. In the 2026 and 2027 interims, LESC staff will monitor implementation of Laws 2026, Chapter 53 (Senate Bill 29). Work in the 2026 interim will include a particular focus on educator preparation program (EPP) impacts, PED development of the math instructional leadership framework, and parent notification and screeners.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	Overarching Systems

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **April to August 2026:** Engagement with EPPs impacted by Laws 2026, Chapter 53.
- **August 2026:** Complete background research and engagement with PED and MSAC.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Panel presentation with PED and EPPs and brief presented to LESC in September 2026.

**Long-Term Goals**

- New Mexico will develop and implement a structured, evidence-based mathematics instructional leadership framework to strengthen mathematics teaching and learning.
- PED and EPPs are prepared to implement new requirements for elementary and secondary mathematics teaching licenses requiring additional mathematics methods courses.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
How is PED collaborating with the Mathematics and Science Advisory Council (MSAC) to develop a mathematics instructional leadership framework by December 31, 2026?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings with PED and MSAC</li> </ul>
How are EPPs not already requiring six hours of math methods courses updating course requirements for math education programs to comply with the requirements of Laws 2026, Chapter 54?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with EPPs implemented by Laws 2026, Chapter 54</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the **Legislature** requires the implementation of a math instructional leadership framework **and the Public Education Department** adopts grade-specific math assessments that can be integrated with instructional supports and implemented with minimal impact to instructional time **and School Districts and Charter Schools** implement with fidelity, **then teachers** will have timely, actionable assessment data to inform their practice, **and student learning**, and therefore student proficiency, will improve.

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- Math and Science Advisory Council (MSAC)
- Educator preparation programs (EPPs)



**Topic: Screen Time Memorial**

Research has revealed an association between higher total screen time and lower reading and math achievement on standardized tests in elementary school. Limiting unnecessary screen time aligns with the goals of many schools to improve student well-being. However, schools administer computer-based assessments to elementary students several times per year and mandate them to participate in computerized tutoring sessions associated with those assessments. In the 2026 legislative session, lawmakers passed House Memorial 2 (HM2), which requests LESC to conduct a comprehensive study of the use of screen time for instruction and assessment in elementary classrooms, including the impacts of programs on student learning, development, and well-being. HM2 also requests the Public Education Department (PED) to convene stakeholders to establish developmentally appropriate guidelines for screen use in elementary school classrooms and to ensure required technology use in elementary classrooms is purposeful, evidence-based, equitable, and supportive of healthy child development.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	Overarching Systems

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **April 2026:** Local engagement and data gathering, including survey with NMPTA families.
- **May 2026:** Complete project scoping, including collaborating with PED.
- **June 2026:** Complete comprehensive study on the use of screen time as required by HM2.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Staff brief presented to LESC in July 2026; PED presentation to LESC after completion of HM2 stakeholder work.

**Long-Term Goals**

- New Mexico will have a comprehensive understanding of screen use in public elementary school classrooms.
- Required technology use in New Mexico public elementary school classrooms will be purposeful, evidence-based, equitable, and supportive of healthy child development.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
What are the impacts of screen time for instruction and assessment in elementary classrooms on student learning, development, and well-being?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research/national engagement with organizations such as NCSL, ECS, and LPI</li> <li>• Local engagement and data gathering with organizations such as NMPTA</li> </ul>
How is PED collaborating with HM2 stakeholders to establish developmentally appropriate guidelines for daily screen use in elementary school classrooms?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PED</li> <li>• HM2 stakeholders</li> <li>• New Mexico families</li> </ul>
What guidance and support does PED provide for school districts and charter schools to ensure required technology use in the classroom is purposeful, evidence-based, equitable, and supportive of health child development? What impact does this have on teacher’s practice? How is PED ensuring required technology use in elementary classrooms is purposeful, evidence-based, equitable, and supportive of healthy child development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PED</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the **Legislature** requires technology use in elementary classrooms to be purposeful, evidence-based, equitable, and supportive of healthy child development **and the Public Education Department** collaborates with families to establish developmentally appropriate

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- New Mexico Parent Teachers Association (PTA)



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guidelines screen use in elementary classrooms **and School Districts and Charter Schools** implement developmentally appropriate screen limits in elementary classrooms **then** the risks of excessive screen time in elementary schools will be mitigated; student learning will be more developmentally appropriate and hands-on; and student learning and student achievement will increase.

- Child development experts for the University of New Mexico (UNM) or other state institutions
- National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), Education Commission of the States (ECS), Learning Policy Institute (LPI)
- HM2 stakeholders, particularly New Mexico families



**Topic: Special Education**

In the 2026 legislative session, lawmakers passed Laws 2026, Chapter 55 (SB64), which created the Special Education Act, codified the Office of Special Education (OSE), and established several LESC policy recommendations, such as the development and standardization of a universal Individualized Education Plan (IEP). In the 2026 interim, LESC staff intend to understand how students with disabilities are currently served, and how supports such as staffing and service provision differ across the state for students with similar disabilities and similar classifications of need. In the future, LESC staff plan to examine how service provision and staffing relates to student outcomes; what it looks like for school districts and charter schools to effectively implement, and for the Public Education Department’s (PED’s) newly codified OSE to monitor, special education programs and services; and what is needed to ensure sufficient and responsive funding for students with disabilities.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	Overarching Systems

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **March 2026:** Provide formal request to PED Data Governance Council, in partnership with OSE, for special education student level data.
- **April to June 2026:** PED provides LESC staff with requested data; LESC perform data analysis.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Final report presented to committee in July 2026; work will continue in future years as indicated within problem statement.

**Long-Term Goals**

- Leverage data from the universal IEP and NOVA to analyze special education services and staffing for students with disabilities in New Mexico to better understand how students with disabilities receive services across the state.
- Provide supports and funding to ensure all students with disabilities receive an adequate, sufficient education.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
How does service provision for students with similar disabilities look across New Mexico? Are students receiving varying services and if so, what factors appear to influence the provision of services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nova special education data</li> <li>• Engagement with OSE</li> <li>• Engagement with schools</li> </ul>
How does special education staffing differ across the state? How are special education staff trained, including training to formulate IEPs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Licensed special education educators and staff</li> <li>• Currently practicing special education educators and staff by district</li> </ul>
What are best practices to ensure IEPs include supports best suited for each student with a disability; what practices would ensure students with disabilities are receiving required hours and services as specified in their IEPs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration with PED</li> <li>• Research/national engagement with organizations like NCSL, ECS, LPI, etc.</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the Legislature provides adequate and sufficient funding for special education services and the Public Education Department ensures School Districts and Charter Schools utilize best practices to craft IEPs to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities and students with disabilities receive required hours and services as specified therein, then special education student engagement and student learning will increase; and special education students will be provided with a constitutionally sufficient education, as required by the consolidated *Martinez-Yazzie* lawsuit.

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- Local education agencies (LEAs)
- National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)
- Education Commission of the States (ECS)



**Topic: Student Health Professionals**

Teachers, administrators, support staff, and other school personnel all play a pivotal role in creating a safe, welcoming, and engaging school environment. Professionals including counselors, nurses, psychologists, and social workers are also critical to maintaining students’ physical, social, and emotional well-being. However, significant gaps in New Mexico’s data make it challenging to assess the extent of personnel shortages in these roles (especially in behavioral health functions), their workloads, and the success of recruitment and retention efforts. LESC staff intend to provide lawmakers and school officials with a better understanding of essential staffing needs, strategies to hire and retain employees, and strategies to support students’ needs beyond the classroom. Additionally, LESC staff intend to offer specific recommendations to improve the state’s data collection to better understand these segments of the school workforce.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	Overarching Systems

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **March 2026:** Contact higher education institutions and national organizations to request data.
- **April 2026:** Conduct interviews with school leaders about their approach to staffing, and the limitations or barriers that shape these decisions.
- **May 2026:** Present review of available data to LESC: Licensure, graduation from relevant degree programs, enrollment in programs, etc.
- **April - October 2026:** Site visits to schools to observe support staff work routines.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Final report presented to LESC in 2026.

**Long-Term Goals**

- Legislators and school officials have a clear understanding of the essential student health professionals needed for schools of varying sizes and populations.
- Data collection efforts (surveys, reporting through Nova) are in place to regularly gather information on the distribution of student health professionals, the day-to-day responsibilities of these personnel, and areas of need.
- School districts and charter schools report greater success in recruiting and retaining nurses, social workers, psychologists, and counselors. Panorama survey data for schools throughout the state shows improvement in student perceptions of school climate.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
How well do New Mexico’s current data collection practices capture the number and distribution of student health professional roles in K-12 schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nova data on staffing</li> <li>• Survey of relevant support staff in schools across New Mexico.</li> </ul>
What approaches are New Mexico schools taking to provide essential support services, particularly behavioral health supports, to their students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case study site visits to three or four schools across New Mexico.</li> </ul>
What is the minimum number of student health professionals needed for a school depending on its size and the needs of its student population?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with national organizations about their methodology for setting student-staff ratios.</li> </ul>
How many of these student health professionals are New Mexico’s degree programs producing each year and how well does the number of degree completers meet demonstrated demand in the state?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HED data on enrollment and degree completion figures for nursing, social work, psychology, and counseling degrees and certificates.</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the Legislature provides correct funding and enacts evidence-based recruitment and retention policies and the Public Education Department establishes tailored staffing recommendations and

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- School districts and charter schools



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partners with higher education institutions to create new data collection, **and School Districts and Charter Schools** design staffing models aligned with PED's guidance and adopt recruitment and retention incentives at the local level, **then students** in New Mexico will have improved access to essential support staff, leading to improved student outcomes, and a more balanced workload for teachers and other school staff.

- National and state associations for school nurses, social workers, counselors, and psychologists
- Higher education institutions offering degree programs for the four roles mentioned above.





**Topic: Teacher Workload**

Teachers regularly complete a wide range of non-instructional tasks that are important for student outcomes: lesson planning, providing students feedback, engaging in communities of practice, analyzing student data, communicating with parents, pursuing professional development, and much more. In addition, in understaffed schools, or those with high turnover, teachers often take on the responsibilities of other professionals due to necessity. While many of a teacher’s non-instructional responsibilities are critical, research continues to show teachers in New Mexico, and across the country, report feeling overwhelmed, often noting their professional responsibilities far exceed the hours of the school day. A 2025 [study](#) by the RAND Corporation (a national, nonpartisan think tank) found teachers were more likely than similar working adults to report poor well-being. During the 2026 legislative session, the Legislature passed House Memorial 47, which requests LESC staff to study statutory requirements and current practices related to teacher workload and the structure of the instructional day in New Mexico’s public schools.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
<b>Educator Ecosystem</b>	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	Overarching Systems

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **April 2026:** Gather input from partners, including information from school districts and charter schools.
- **May 2026:** Analyze state statute, administrative code, and Public Education Department (PED) requirements.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Final report presented to LESC in summer 2026.

**Long-Term Goals**

- Teacher workload expectations are achievable within contracted work hours.
- Non-instructional tasks are streamlined and unnecessary requirements are eliminated.
- Teachers have adequate, protected, and compensated time for planning, collaboration, and additional duties necessary to support effective teaching.
- Teachers are supported by adequate support staff, including educational assistants, counselors, nurses, testing coordinators, and others.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
How is time allocated to teachers during the school day, including both instructional and non-instructional work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State statute and administrative rule</li> </ul>
How do state and local requirements impact teacher schedules and instructional time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State statute, administrative code, and PED requirements</li> <li>• Survey data</li> </ul>
How does the availability of resources impact teacher schedules and instructional time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SY26 school workforce data</li> <li>• Survey data</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the **Legislature** ensures teachers are compensated for adequate work time and school support staff are paid competitive wages, and the **Public Education Department** supports the streamlining of non-instructional tasks, and **School Districts and Charter Schools** strategically staff their schools and organize teacher work schedules, **then teachers** will have adequate time to complete all of their responsibilities and turnover will decrease, **and students** will consistently receive high quality instruction and support.

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- Educator Preparation Programs
- Teachers’ Unions
- Learning Policy Institute
- Legislative Finance Committee (LFC)



**Topic: Tribal Technical Assistance Centers**

New Mexico served 40.4 thousand students affiliated with tribal nations across the state in the 2024-2025 school year (SY25). Native American students were also one of the student groups in grades three through eight that showed the strongest literacy growth from 2022 to 2025. Tribal Education Technical Assistance Centers (TETACs) were established in 2023 via Laws 2023, Chapter 72 (House Bill 280) as a supportive mechanism for school districts and charters school serving students affiliated with tribal nations. HB280 required two TETACs in geographically distinct regions of the state to provide services for Indigenous teacher education, professional development, instructional models and materials, and promote tribal capacity building in education policy. The Higher Education Department (HED) is responsible for establishing and coordinating the proposed assistance center and in 2026, LESC staff will monitor updates in the application process and potential sites.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	Overarching Systems

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **April 2026:** Meet with HED for update on TETACs. Research interventions and evidence-based practices for promoting Indigenous language and culture.
- **May 2026:** Draft outline and brief for presentation.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Brief presented to LESC in May 2026.

**Long-Term Goals**

- Assist TETACs in identifying barriers in education services for New Mexico’s Indigenous communities; and assist in guidance for an implementation strategy that improves the quality of education services in Indigenous communities.
- TETACs will implement a cultural framework for determining the skills and competencies to support language and cultural development; and will align framework standards to state standards to assess progress and sustain TETAC mission and goals.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
What is the status of TETACs and what role will these assistance centers play in New Mexico’s education system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TETACs management plans</li> <li>• TETACS project inventory</li> <li>• Personnel Roles and Duties</li> </ul>
How will the two TETACs coordinate their work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HED Meeting</li> </ul>
To what extent will the assistance centers help support the goals of the Indian Education Act?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tribal Higher Education Institution selected</li> </ul>
Are there any other initiatives or priorities connected to the work of the TETACs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential Partners in TETACs</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the **Legislature** ensures TETAC applications and operations are in progress, and the **Public Education Department** continues its collaboration with HED to institute culturally and linguistically relevant support for tribal nations and **School Districts and Charter Schools** initiate partnerships with TETACs then New Mexico’s tribal nations will facilitate education policy promoting Indigenous values, languages and cultures; and tribal nations will be able to offer its students and community an education that affirms and promotes Indigenous identity.

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)
- Higher Education Department (HED)
- Tribal Education Directors



**Topic: Transportation**

New Mexico provides funding to transport kindergarten through 12th-grade (K-12) public school students using a formula that accounts for factors such as ridership, miles traveled, and fleet size. For FY27, the Legislature allocated \$144 million for this purpose through the General Appropriation Act of 2026. Previous LESC staff work has highlighted gaps reported by local education agencies (LEAs) in which state funding does not always align with actual costs, resulting in inadequate transportation funding of certain programs and services, and sometimes resulting in LEAs having to supplement transportation operation from other operational funds. During the 2026 interim, LESC staff will examine issues beyond traditional to-and-from student transportation, including transportation of foster students, extracurricular trips, and the need for school vehicles, with the goal of identifying gaps and improving the accuracy and equity of funding.

LESC Roadmap Focus Areas	
Educator Ecosystem	Whole-Child Supports
Academic Design	<b>Overarching Systems</b>

**2026 Goals and Deliverables**

- **June through August 2026:** Convene LEA and partner working groups to gather input on transportation needs, costs, and program impacts. Collect feedback from LEAs and collaborate with the Public Education Department (PED) to identify gaps and additional priorities.
- **September through October 2026:** Collect and analyze funding and expenditure data to assess how current transportation costs impact LEAs and other areas of school operations. Evaluate and model additional transportation expenses the Legislature could consider funding in the future.
- **October through November 2026:** Synthesize findings, evaluate key issues, and finalize recommendations for improving accuracy, equity, and alignment of transportation funding.
- **Committee Deliverable:** Final report presented to LESC in October 2026.

**Long-Term Goals**

- Strengthen engagement with LEAs, PED, and partners to identify gaps in transportation access and funding, including traditional student routes, foster student transportation, and extracurricular activities.
- Reduce funding gaps by analyzing expenditures, modeling additional transportation costs the Legislature could cover, and assessing how current funding affects LEA operations and student services.
- Establish and implement a sustainable transportation funding framework that aligns with LEA needs, ensures equitable access for all students, supports efficient vehicle and route management, and enables long-term planning.

Research Questions	Data/Resources Needed
What additional transportation needs do LEAs have that are not currently identified or addressed in the state’s transportation distribution formula?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from LEAs</li> <li>• Collaboration with PED</li> <li>• Source funding and expenditures data</li> </ul>
Which variables in the transportation funding formula warrant closer review, and what additional cost components should the Legislature consider covering in the future?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from LEAs</li> <li>• Collaboration with PED</li> </ul>
How do the transportation costs of existing programs affect other areas of school operations or student services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from LEAs</li> <li>• Collaboration with PED</li> <li>• Source funding and expenditures data</li> </ul>

**Theory of Change for Initiative**

If the Legislature identifies and addresses gaps in transportation access and funding, as well as statutory limitations on the allowable

**Partners**

- Public Education Department (PED)



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uses of transportation funding distributions, and **the Public Education Department (PED)** implements a refined transportation funding framework that accurately accounts for the full costs of student transportation, including traditional routes and nontraditional needs such as foster student transportation, extracurricular activities, career and technical education programs, other essential services, and additional school vehicles, and ensures funding gaps necessary to support a sufficient and equitable educational experience are consistently identified and addressed, **then local education agencies (LEAs)** will receive more appropriate and responsive funding, which would provide more equitable, efficient, and sustainable services, improved access to transportation, and increased **student attendance and participation** in academic and enrichment opportunities.

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- Local education agencies