

MINUTES
Legislative Education Study Committee
Santa Fe, New Mexico
April 30 - May 1, 2026

Thursday, April 30

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

Voting: Chair William P. Soules; Vice Chair G. Andrés Romero; Senate President Pro Tempore Mimi Stewart; Senators Craig Brandt and Candy Spence Ezzell; Representatives Brian Baca, Joy Garratt, Tanya Mirabal Moya, and Debbie Sariñana.

Advisory: Senators Crystal Brantley, Natalie Figueroa, Linda M. López, and Harold Pope; Representatives John Block, Catherine J. Cullen, Yanira Gurrola, and Patricia Roybal Caballero.

Guest: Representative Susan Herrera.

(1) Call to Order, Introductions, and Approval of January Minutes.

Senator William P. Soules, Chair, LESC, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Chair Soules facilitated introductions of the members of LESC. John Sena, Director, LESC, introduced LESC staff. A quorum was present. LESC members approved the April agenda and January minutes.

(2) Director's Report. John Sena, Director, LESC, provided an update to committee members on LESC staff activities since the end of the 2026 legislative session. Director Sena provided an overview of the recently published 2026 LESC Post-Session Review and 2026 Quick Guide to New Mexico Education Laws and Budget, two reports by LESC staff on the 2026 legislative session. Director Sena explained the 2026 Post-Session Review is intended for lawmakers, and the 2026 Quick Guide is written with stakeholders and the broader community in mind, to stay up to date with legislation adopted during the legislative session and their potential impacts on communities throughout the state. Director Sena also shared the 2026 interim schedule for the committee, highlighting that LESC will travel to Raton, Taos, Peñasco, Gadsden, Las Cruces, and Rio Rancho for meetings this interim. Finally, Director Sena shared that Mark Montoya, Senior Policy Analyst II, and Julianna Baca, Research and Committee Services Assistant, are leaving LESC for other positions. Director Sena noted LESC will soon begin the hiring process to fill these positions, as well as hiring a teacher on special assignment and summer intern.

LESC committee members thanked LESC staff for their work, flagged the importance of paying close attention to language in the General Appropriation Act (GAA) after governor vetoes, signaled their appreciation for the interim calendar dates not overlapping with Legislative Finance Committee meetings, and asked for future LESC meetings to occur in smaller school districts on the eastern side of the state, among other comments.

(3) Martinez-Yazzie Update. Jessica Hathaway, Deputy Director, LESC, presented a summary brief on action in the *Martinez-Yazzie* lawsuit since the 2025 interim. Deputy Director Hathaway noted the 1st Judicial District Court has not yet ruled in the recent action although the matter is now fully briefed to the court following submissions by both plaintiffs and defendants.

Yvonne Garcia, Deputy Secretary of Student Support Services, Public Education Department (PED); Jill Vice, Deputy Secretary of Special Education, PED; KatieAnn Juanico, Assistant Secretary of Indian Education, PED; Jacqueline Costales, Ed.D., Executive Manager of the Division of Curriculum and Instruction, PED, then presented an update on the department's work part of PED's plan to address the *Martinez-Yazzie* consolidated lawsuit. PED staff updated the committee on literacy and math work in kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) schools and in educator preparation programs, special education initiatives, supports for Native American language and culture certified teachers, supports for English learners with disabilities, innovative staffing pilots, wraparound services for students experiencing homelessness, student engagement, school accountability, and school accreditation processes.

Some committee members expressed agreement with plaintiffs in the *Martinez-Yazzie* consolidated lawsuit that PED's plan to address the lawsuit reflects a summary of ongoing PED work and insufficiently meets the demands of the court's ruling on the lawsuit. Other committee members emphasized the work to address the lawsuit by both the Legislature and PED has been substantial over the past several years and commended PED on their ongoing work. Committee members asked for more information about PED's early implementation of literacy coaching and materials, use of funds appropriated for teacher recruitment, and efforts to reduce superintendent and school leader turnover.

(4) Reading the Public School Support Budget. Daniel Estupiñan, Senior Fiscal Analyst II, LESC, presented an overview of how to read the GAA of 2026, including the public school support section of the bill, nonrecurring appropriations from the general fund, and multiyear appropriations from the public education reform fund. Staff also presented an overview of major appropriations for FY27 and how the committee and general members of the public can use LESC publications to navigate the appropriations for public education.

Members asked about the programmatic features of high-impact tutoring, how staff will present information on programs that are exhausting their multi-year appropriations, and how to identify the different funding sources for career and technical education (CTE). Members also asked about the fiscal impact of Laws 2026, Chapter 8 (House Bill 253) and how members of the public can use LESC publications to identify specific appropriations or legislation.

(5) Research Agenda and LESC Roadmap. Jessica Hathaway, Deputy Director, LESC, presented LESC's research agenda for the 2026 interim and how each agenda item relates to LESC's roadmap to address critical gaps in New Mexico's education system. LESC's research agenda includes 21 distinct

research projects, four working groups, and addresses five memorials passed in the 2025 and 2026 legislative sessions. Committee members expressed appreciation for LESC's ambitious work plan and requested additional updates on school and district leadership turnover, student engagement, school safety, student conduct, and CTE.

Friday, May 1

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

Voting: Chair William P. Soules; Senators Craig Brandt and Candy Spence Ezzell; Representatives Brian Baca, Joy Garrat, and Debbie Sariñana.

Advisory: Senators Natalie Figueroa, Linda M. López, and Harold Pope; Representatives John Block, Catherine J. Cullen, and E. Diane Torres-Velásquez.

Guest: Representative Susan Herrera.

(7) School Leader Panel. Jessica Hathaway, Deputy Director, LESC, facilitated a panel that included Christine E. Griffin, Superintendent, Santa Fe Public Schools; Jennifer Guy, Superintendent, Los Alamos Public Schools; and Sarah Tario, McCurdy Charter School Director. The School Leader Panel discussed funding opportunities and gaps in the current school year, teacher training, and expressed their optimism for student academic growth.

Committee discussion included topics on chronic absenteeism, adequate funding for schools, artificial intelligence for tutoring, and screentime during instructional hours.

(8) PED Rules Review. Conor L. Hicks, Policy Analyst I, LESC, updated members on PED's adoption of three administrative rules covering the community school model, school nurse licensure, and bilingual education endorsement requirements. Mr. Hicks noted minor changes between the proposed rules and the language ultimately adopted by PED. Members asked about the challenges charter schools may face in hiring a full-time community school coordinator and discussed the average overhead costs related to personnel for schools.