

Feedback on the LESC's Two Interim Priorities:
Graduation Requirements and
Teacher Preparation

and

Information About Our Unions' Interim Priorities



Presented by
Dr. Ellen Bernstein, ATF President
Mary Parr-Sanchez, NEA President

2021

New Mexico does not have to mandate that a district create more course options for students—rather, the state should support local autonomy based on each district’s readiness and capacity.

New Mexico should pave the way for districts to create options for students based on the skills and relevant knowledge for their personal future aspirations.

Creating course-taking options in core subjects does not disallow the opportunity to continue the traditional, academic, college-bound pathway that exists now. Allowing for more student-centered choices in core subjects engages students while better preparing them for a variety of futures. Course options can satisfy the same skills with more relevant and engaging content.

Not all students are ready to engage in college-level curriculum during high school. Students have many opportunities to earn college credits in NM high schools, but these opportunities should not be required of all students to earn a high school diploma.

A focus on excellence and equity in high school entails moving away from “seat-time” as a measure of success and moving toward engagement and mastery. The use of capstone projects (also called culminating projects) is one way to exhibit mastery and application of learning.

A recent focus on college and career readiness has brought renewed attention to capstone programs in high schools. The capstone initiative has already begun in NM as an alternative to standardized test proficiency. Implementing capstone courses as an alternate for core graduation requirements further engages students and allows them to take ownership of their learning and future.

By changing current requirements and offering more choices New Mexico can provide opportunities for districts to offer more CTE courses and electives. Each district can establish meaningful partnerships between local industry, post-secondary education, and high school CTE programs.

Other important considerations include:

Community-based curricula and service-learning also increases student engagement.

Community school strategies can help with interventions and services that can mitigate the effects of absenteeism, poverty, and dissociation with school.

Increased access to citizenship education must be part of a well-rounded high school program. Civics education can equip students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to become informed and engaged citizens. Civics is not synonymous with history. Students currently take one semester of Government. This course is typically taken during their senior year and does not focus on civic engagement, but on government structures and functions.

Teacher Preparation

Well prepared teachers have both content knowledge and pedagogical (how to teach) knowledge. Both are equally important.

To develop candidates into well-prepared teachers, preparation programs must provide both course work and supervised practical experiences. Preferably, research, theory and practice are intertwined and take place over time. A 6-week student teaching experience should be considered essential, yet minimum.

Meaningful relationships with students are critical and form the foundation of the teaching and learning process. As such, teacher candidates are best prepared if they can learn while embedded in a school community.

Positive productive teacher/student relationships lead to deeper learning. Deeper learning means that students are able to apply what they have learned in multiple contexts.

Well-prepared teachers know how to:

- Deliberately construct a coherent curriculum of studies;
- Build on the social contexts that shape students' development and learning;
- Apply a deep and flexible understanding of content and pedagogy;
- Use a wide repertoire of teaching strategies that allow them to differentiate and personalize instruction, teach in culturally and linguistically responsive ways, create productive learning communities, and develop formative assessments to guide ever more effective teaching.

New Mexico's rich linguistic and cultural resources must be developed as assets. Dual language education provides a multilingual and multicultural rich experience for students. Deep investments must be made in dual language educators who will in turn foster bilingualism, biliteracy, enhanced awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and high levels of academic achievement in two languages.

Studies show students from diverse backgrounds perform better on standardized tests, have improved attendance, and are suspended less frequently when they have at least one same-race teacher. Nationally, more than half of United States students are racially or ethnically diverse, compared with 80 percent of the teacher workforce identifying as white.

New Mexico's teacher workforce also has gaps in representation. Sixty-two percent of students identify as Hispanic in the state, whereas only 34 percent of the teacher workforce identify as the same. Only 3 percent of the teacher workforce is Native American, whereas 10 percent of New Mexico students are Native American. *LESC Annual Report 2021*

CORE VALUES

Teachers matter.

Quality teaching profoundly impacts students' lifelong success.

Teaching is a profession.

Like medicine and law, teaching combines theoretical knowledge with practical application. Committed Teacher Residents can learn to be effective teachers for all students through sustained clinical experiences.

Teacher preparation and development integrates research, theory, and practice.

University faculty, co-teachers, school leaders, and residents exist as a collaborative community of practice.

Collaborative leadership drives school improvement.

All voices are valued in the decision-making process.

Equity and social justice must be at the center of educational practices.

All students are valued for their identity and intersectionality.

Students deserve and are enriched by teachers who reflect their diversity.

Intentional recruitment and retention of teachers of color purposefully creates a diverse teacher workforce.

Relationships among teachers and students are the foundation of teaching and learning.

Teaching and learning occurs through intentional, meaningful engagement with colleagues, students, families, communities, and stakeholders.

Reflection and inquiry drive student growth.

Teachers and learners rigorously question themselves, their practices, and the world around them and reflect on past actions for future improvement.

Growth and development for students and teachers occurs over time.

Learning, learning how to learn, and learning how to teach well are lifelong endeavors.

Paid residencies are most commonly associated with medical professionals, however, the most innovative research in education calls for the practice to be embedded into teacher preparation programs. Paid residencies would attract more educators to enroll in formal preparation programs that better prepare educators to enter their classrooms as the most experienced and well-versed teachers.

Working conditions are cited as the number one reason for teachers leaving the profession. Working conditions are not limited to physical building issues: they include district and school leadership, appropriate support staffing, teacher efficacy and agency.

The essence of creativity is figuring out how to use what you already know in order to go beyond what you already think.

Jerome Bruner

Connections

HM18 (2021): TEACHER WORKFORCE TASK FORCE: A House Memorial, passed by Natalie Figueroa. Calls on HED, PED, educator preparation programs (2 and 4 year), Indian and Hispanic education secretaries, unions, etc. to create a group to study the educator pipeline, including subcommittees for: scholarship/loan programs, faculty capacity, recruitment of teachers, credentials and licensing for educators, teacher prep programs, compensation, and professional development in New Mexico.

HM46 (2020): EDUCATOR COMPENSATION TASK FORCE: A House Memorial, died in HEC after tabled indefinitely, sponsored by Andres Romero and Christine Trujillo. Aimed to study an alternative compensation for NM Educators through the funding formula structure to include a teacher weighted formula that compensates schools with more funding for higher-tiered, higher-quality teachers. The HM also mentions providing diverse opportunities for teachers to develop and move up career lattices. The taskforce would enlist PED, NEA, AFT, teachers, principals, and superintendents.

HB62 (2020): TEACHER MENTORSHIP PROGRAM: A House Bill, passed by Sheryl Stapleton, Andrea Romero, Willie Madrid, Debra Sariñana, and Joy Garratt. Tasks PED with developing a framework for a teacher mentorship program for all beginning teachers with individual support, structured training for mentors, evaluation, etc. Also, requires: reporting to PED from each school district and charter schools' program; technical assistance from PED; compensation distribution; and reporting on participation with description of services from each district.

HB92 (2020): TEACHER RESIDENCY ACT: A House Bill, passed by Debra Sariñana and Joy Garratt. Creating a new section of the Public School Code to develop a grant program, administered by PED, that selects participants aimed to diversify the profession, fill high-need teaching positions, and provide teacher preparation coursework during a guided apprenticeship in the classroom with an expert teacher.

HB20 (2019): GROW YOUR OWN TEACHERS ACT: A House Bill, passed by Joy Garratt, Michael Padilla, Christine Trujillo, and Raymundo Lara. Creating scholarships and a fund for educational assistants that want to become teachers, acknowledging barriers for distance learning in rural

In addition to the LESC's Two Interim Priorities: Graduation Requirements and Teacher Preparation we would like to bring your attention to educators' priorities for the interim and near-future. These include:

Enrichment as remediation and Embedding Social Emotion Learning

Social emotional learning is not an add on—it is embedded into classrooms and school cultures. Honoring the social emotional needs of learners is negated if we try to teach faster so that students try to learn fast to “catch up.” Students can better obtain real-life skills, such as critical thinking, when they are supported in the engagement of deep curricular studies and when schools move away from overly abundant lists of content designed to prepare students for a standardized test that no longer exists.

Enrichment opportunities can be a crucial part of schools' efforts to reestablish normalcy after the pandemic, foster social connectedness, and maximize academic achievement.

Enrichment provides important social developmental and mental health benefits.

Enrichment is not the same as forcing students to take high-level math courses or mandating all students pass an AP course. Enrichment is not overloading students with excessive homework. Enrichment is about depth of knowledge and student engagement.

When we try to improve educational opportunities and life outcomes by focusing solely on what happens in schools, we severely limit our ability to support children's development.

Community Schools are comprehensive public schools that provide a range of services and supports for children, youth and families across the day and throughout the year. ELTP and K-5+ money could be used to increase the number of community schools in NM.

School Community Networks (part of Community School Framework) that create intentional connections between schools and community organizations with the purpose of promoting and supporting students' learning needs can help mitigate the effects of poverty on cognitive, language and socioemotional skills. Families must be involved in these connections.

Childhood poverty, hunger and increased exposure to violence creates a “fight, flight or freeze” response in children and impacts their cognitive functioning and their ability to access learning. These “social determinants of health” will have a much bigger effect on learning and “learning loss” over time than one year of pandemic learning. These “determinants” are the main reasons students in minority communities continue to underperform compared to their more affluent peers.

Staffing for the needs of students

Support staff can have profound effects on student learning and are vital to properly address everyday student issues such as physical and mental health problems, homelessness, and all adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

Teaching conditions – which also define learning conditions for students – are a strong predictor of teachers’ decisions about where to teach and whether to stay. Appropriate staffing for the needs of students is essential.

Supporting student mental health in New Mexico is a critical step to addressing the predictability of disparities by race, socioeconomic status, and disability, and will accelerate learning and achievement for all students.

Student mental health needs are best served when the school community is supported by a team of trained professionals and support staff including Licensed School Social Workers, Licensed School Counselors, Licensed School Psychologists, Licensed School Nurses, and Behavioral Support Specialists or equivalent educational support professional staff.

An Intentional Design for Middle Schools for Young Adolescents.

As a result of the No Child Left Behind Act middle schools have reverted back to a junior high model that no longer takes into account the unique developmental needs of middle school students at all. The impact of this shift can be seen in dropout rates.

Kids who drop out of high school usually start to pull away in middle school. Research indicates that there are several reasons for this such as a bullying incident, feeling hopeless academically, like in math, a suspension or expulsion, or some kind of social problem that gets out of hand.

Refocusing on a middle school model along with a specific credential in middle school teaching can provide students in early adolescence with an environment that can help them negotiate the impact of puberty on their intellectual, social, and emotional lives.

Improving Education the New Mexico Way: An Evidence-Based Approach

<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/new-mexico-improving-education-report>

Building a Strong and Diverse Teaching Profession

<https://www.teachingplaybook.org/>