



New Mexico School Superintendents Association

*Presentation to the
Legislative Education Study Committee
September 23, 2020*

The issues identified in my July 17 committee presentation remain unresolved:

As districts wrestle with the challenge of designing school reentry in these unprecedented times, the following three factors further complicate this task for superintendents:

1. A “one size fits all” approach to providing guidance to very diverse schools and communities;
2. An ever changing landscape, with new guidance and pronouncements daily or weekly; and
3. The struggle to understand PED’s relationship with LEA’s... Are we allies or adversaries?

Reentry guidance from PED fails to differentiate for district diversity.

The latest example... The MERV 13 filter requirement published on 9/3/20 ignored HVAC unit type & filter compatibility.

Reentry is a moving target... and the constant uncertainty hinders proper planning (and implementation).

The latest example... 50% caps BY ROSTER forces the reworking of plans that took months to prepare!

The PED vacillates between Technical Assistance & Compliance/Enforcement

The latest example... The use of the state fire marshal to “verify” what district leaders have already signed assurances about.

Bottom line: The state's 89 district superintendents remain committed to providing a safe reentry for all students and school staff.

We have asked PED in writing to treat us as a trusted partner!

Instructional Spending

- Superintendents are fearful about what massive enrollment fluctuations will mean for operational and transportation budgets, given that funding for 2021-2022 is based on enrollment and ridership during this 2020-2021 school year.
- PED reports that “homeschool” numbers are up approximately 50% this year, and districts (especially in border counties) are seeing some students/families relocate out of state to pursue educational access.

At-Risk Expenditures

- Since at-risk funds are embedded in the SEG, the special session legislation which reduced the SEG also reduced at-risk funding, jeopardizing our efforts to serve students identified in the Yazzie/Martinez ruling.
- Furthermore, at-risk narratives submitted by districts with their budgets identified plans which may no longer be feasible given the restrictions related to public health orders.
- At-risk expenditure reports which will be submitted in Spring 2021 to PED and LFC may not align well with plans described in the narrative.

New Program Participation

- K-5+ programs were stymied by both teacher and family uneasiness due to the pandemic. Even with new program applications approved, participation totals will likely be flat or lower.
- ELTP programs saw higher interest, but perhaps only due to statutory coercion... requiring districts to opt in or defend why they chose not to. However, even with more districts applying, a number of ELTP applications have been denied, some on technicalities.
- Also, districts on variable calendars need “equivalent hours” flexibility to ensure that ELTP requirements are not disproportionately burdensome.
- Furthermore, remote learning environments have made some ELTP programs challenging (or even impossible) to implement.

Instructional Materials Budgets

- Many districts faced unforeseen costs, as remote learning choices required “out of cycle” purchases of newer textbook editions in order to access digital tools and resources.
- The spring adoption cycle also included procedural hurdles, such as how to ensure public participation in the instructional material review process while campus buildings were shuttered by executive order.
- A more immediate need than new textbooks was funding to increase device inventory and student internet access. Yet IM funds are not an eligible source of funds to meet these needs... and CARES Act funds are already oversubscribed.

Several requests

- Please consider extending some statutory deadlines. For example, the “Attendance for Success Act” requires reports & plans by October, but last year’s attendance data is incomplete and attendance this fall looks entirely different, with little ability to implement interventions.
- Please don’t correlate turnover to salaries. Resignations, retirements, and other departures will likely be up this year due to unprecedented stress related to the pandemic, not necessarily due to wages.
- Please consider adding language in the FY 22 General Appropriations Act which allows school funding to be based on the higher of FY 20 or FY 21 enrollment & transportation ridership... This safety net is key!

Thanks for the opportunity to present in these challenging times...



This isn't the mask you wore to school this morning.



No, this one is way cooler. I traded mine to Taylor who traded with Hunter.