

B i t e - S i z e



Las Vegas City Schools and West Las Vegas Schools will each test all-electric school buses for six weeks as part of a two-year pilot by the New Mexico Economic Development Department to assess how electric school buses perform in local conditions. This pilot is supported by \$5 million in capital outlay funds and will include additional communities.



The 2026-2027 federal Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is now open for students and families to complete. The FAFSA unlocks financial aid for college and is used to determine eligibility for federal and state grants, student loans, work-study options, and scholarships. More information can be found at fafsa.gov.



New Mexico's longest-serving superintendent, V. Sue Cleveland, is retiring from Rio Rancho Public Schools (RRPS) in the 2025-2026 school year. Superintendent Cleveland has served in the role for over 30 years as RRPS' only superintendent. As RRPS begins its leadership search, LESC thanks Superintendent Cleveland for her service and leadership.



i n f o r m E D

a publication of the Legislative Education Study Committee

Senator William P. Soules, Chair / Representative G. Andrés Romero, Vice Chair / John Sena, Director / October 2025

From the Chair

New Mexico won't elect a new governor for more than a year. But voters are facing a choice this November that might have an even bigger impact on their local communities: electing new school board members.

While school board members don't weigh in on state level policies or budgets, they do play an outsized—and important—role in interpreting those policies and deciding how to spend money on schools. They hire superintendents, decide whether to improve school facilities, and make sure students and staff have the resources they need.

Potential school board members also need to know what not to do. If elected, their job shouldn't include weighing in on who coaches the football team or who gets to be the high school principal. Instead, they should focus their attention on making sure employees are paid and treated well, that concerned citizens are heard and directed to the proper channels, and that students and educators are the center of every decision they make.

While new school board members are required to complete minimum training requirements, it is important candidates understand the job before they run. Our education system can be complex, finding solutions can be difficult, and doing the right thing isn't always be easy. Be ready for some angry late night phone calls and complex choices.

As a former school board member, I know being on the board isn't a glamorous job, but if done well, it can be one of the most rewarding ways to make positive change in your community. Good luck to all the candidates.

William P. Soules

Martinez-Yazzie Action Plan Draft Released

The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED), on October 2, publicly released a draft of its remedial action plan intended to address the findings in the *Martinez-Yazzie* consolidated education sufficiency lawsuit. The department also released a survey through which the public can provide feedback on the draft. The deadline for feedback is October 17.

In April 2025, in response to a motion of non-compliance from the plaintiffs, First Judicial District Court Judge Matthew Wilson ruled PED and the state had failed to comply with the court's 2018 order in the case and "continue to violate at-risk students' right to a uniform and sufficient education mandated by the New Mexico Constitution." Wilson ordered the development of a remedial action plan that would achieve compliance and provide guidance to the Legislature and the executive, "particularly when making difficult budgetary decisions that need to survive political and economic shifts."

PED's draft is broken into four "critical needs." These include: equitable access to high-quality instruction; equitable access to well-prepared, culturally, and

linguistically responsive educators; equitable access to academic, social, well-being, and behavioral services; and effective funding, support, and accountability to drive systemic improvement. In addition to short narratives describing those needs, along with examples of community feedback in those areas, the plan also includes a sequenced three-year action plan for each area. The action plan also describes responsibility for the proposed actions by entity, laying out goals for the department, Legislature, schools, and more.

The draft plan is the culmination of a months-long process that included feedback from more than 1,000 participants at 12 public convenings, 430 participants at five virtual sessions, and more than 1,200 online survey responses, all of which were organized by the Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation to gather community input. PED then worked with WestEd, a national non-profit education organization, to compile input and write the plan.

While plaintiffs' motion originally called for Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) staff to lead development of the action plan, Matthews ruled LESC was not

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Out-of-School Time: Investing in Student Success

Out-of-school time (OST) programs provide students with access to a broad range of academic and enrichment activities that foster a well-rounded education and strengthen connections between schools, families, and communities. These programs give students safe, engaging spaces to learn, explore new interests, and build skills that extend beyond the classroom.

In recent years, the New Mexico Legislature has taken significant steps to better support OST. In FY24, lawmakers appropriated \$20 million for OST programs through the state’s General Appropriation Act (GAA). In FY25, the GAA included \$15 million for OST programs, though \$8.5 million of the total was dedicated specifically to high-impact tutoring (HIT). This directive left \$6.5 million for non-tutoring OST programs. In FY26, \$15 million was again appropriated for OST programs

(\$14 million for OST and \$1 million for tutoring initiatives for at-risk students) marking a shift in favor of expanded OST opportunities.

According to the Public Education Department (PED), the department’s FY26 OST Intent to Apply generated \$30.2 million in requests—\$26.4 million from school districts and charter schools and \$3.8 million from community-based organizations. This demand, more than double the state’s OST appropriation, highlights both the growing value of OST programs and the need for continued investment, particularly in rural and tribal communities where access remains limited.

New Mexico also receives federal support for OST through the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant program. Between FY22 and FY25, the state received between \$9.8 million and \$10.4 million an-

nually, funding programs that reached more than 9,500 students across 117 schools. These federally supported programs combine academic support with enrichment and social-emotional learning activities.

To better understand the OST landscape, LESC staff conducted site visits and virtual interviews with 11 providers representing school districts, charter schools, and community-based organizations. Participants consistently emphasized the need for sustained, predictable funding, the high cost of staffing quality programs, and the importance of balancing academic support with enrichment, whether through gardening, music, STEM exploration, or art.

LESC staff will share more about OST programs, site visit findings, and policy and budget recommendations at hearings on October 16 to help ready lawmakers for the 2026 legislative session.

Martinez-Yazzie

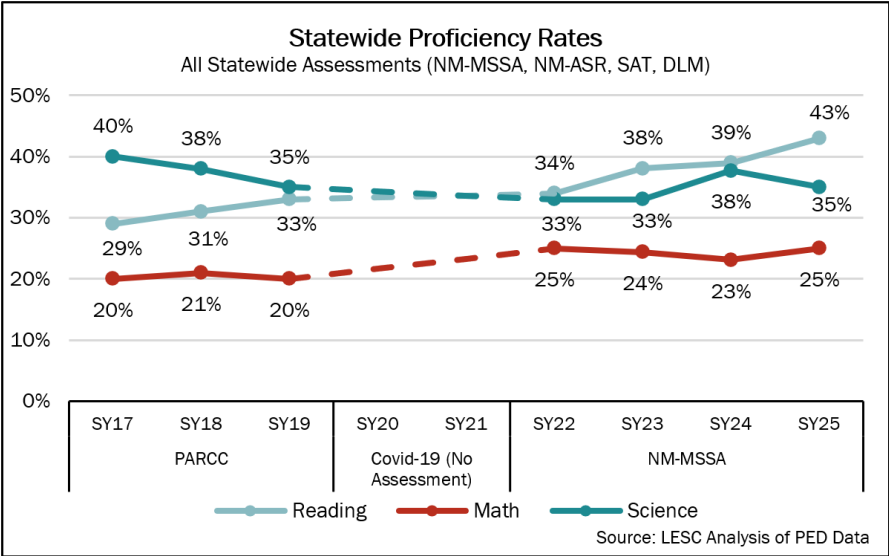
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party to the case, but staff could support PED in developing the plan.

Members of LESC staff attended the majority of public convenings and provided technical assistance and support to PED in writing the plan. Staff continues to support PED as it estimates potential costs in implementing the plan’s proposed action items.

A final draft of the plan is due to the court on November 3. Plaintiffs will then have until December 1 to file objections.

Assessment Results Show Steady Recovery and Growth in Reading



The Public Education Department (PED) released assessment results from the 2024-2025 school year (SY25). Results show encouraging momentum in student learning, particularly in reading, where statewide proficiency rose to 43 percent (up from 39 percent in SY24), the highest in recent years. Math proficiency also ticked up slightly to 25 percent, while science proficiency dropped slightly to 35 percent.

The upward trend in reading results highlights the positive impact of ongoing instructional supports and underscores the state’s focus on literacy in recent years. A full discussion of statewide assessment results will be shared at LESC’s hearing at Organ Mountain High School on October 15.

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October 2025

Published monthly in the interim by the
Legislative Education Study Committee
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Santa Fe, NM 87501
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<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Entity/LESC/Default>

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