

B i t e - S i z e



Education Week recently reported graduation rates at U.S. Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools have increased from just over half of students graduating within four years in 2015 to 79 percent in 2025. School officials attribute the increase to better data reporting and innovative practices, such as career and technical education (CTE).



In a July 2026 [report](#), the New Mexico Department of Justice (DOJ) concluded that Gallup-McKinley County Schools (GMCS) relies on out-of-school suspensions more heavily than most New Mexico school districts, with DOJ findings showing Native American and Hispanic students experience a disproportionate share of that discipline.



PED's recently released [Educator Accountability Report](#) (EARs) revealed large disparities in clinical practice hours between New Mexico's educator preparation programs (EPPs), with some teacher residents receiving twice as many hours as residents in other programs. Clinical practice is one measure of EPP quality.



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 / July 2026

From the Chair

Last week, I was proud to present at the Education Commission of the States about New Mexico's guaranteed payments for attendance, or GPA, program. The program pays select unhoused students \$500 per month for coming to school, completing work, and attending tutoring sessions.

Students receive resources to help their families, and schools address the poor outcomes often experienced by unhoused students. After a successful pilot—participants demonstrated a 93 percent graduation rate—the LESC recommended expanding the program, and the Legislature appropriated \$6.3 million over three years.

It's too early to tell how the expanded program will fare, but it shows how New Mexico can use its resources to support innovative efforts that improve educational outcomes and student lives.

Another opportunity is creating sustainable, recurring funding for career and technical education (CTE). CTE programs provide engaging, hands-on experiences, academic content, and workforce skills that will be useful whatever students choose to do. Participants also graduate at higher rates than their peers.

Over the last few years, New Mexico has paid for some CTE programs with one-time funding the Legislature must reallocate every year. LESC and its staff have worked with districts and charter schools on a new method that would provide base funding for approved programs and incentive funding when students concentrate in career pathways or earn credentials.

By adopting innovative strategies that benefit students and adequately funding them, New Mexico can continue to be a model for the country.

William P. Soules

Sustainably Funding Career and Technical Education

Career-connected learning has been a growing priority in New Mexico in recent years, evidenced by increased investments in career and technical education (CTE), summer internships, innovation zones, and other programs intended to engage students, strengthen college and career readiness, and support the workforce. State funding increased substantially in FY24, when the Legislature appropriated \$40 million for CTE, and funding has remained steady since.

Even with that investment, the state's primary CTE funding is appropriated on a year-over-year basis. Most funding is provided through nonrecurring appropriations and grants rather than a permanent statutory formula, while the seven-year NextGen CTE pilot expired after FY26. In partnership with school leaders, LESC staff have found this structure can make it difficult for schools to plan for the staffing, equipment, facilities and recurring costs needed to sustain high-quality programs.

Drawing on LESC work in recent years, LESC staff have developed a proposed categorical funding framework for legislative consideration. A categorical mechanism would establish a dedicated,

rules-based distribution for CTE, comparable in structure to other earmarked education funding streams. The proposal is designed to provide greater predictability while tying funding more clearly to program quality and student outcomes.

The need for a more durable approach is reflected in both participation and cost data. In school year 2024-2025 (SY25), approximately 85 percent of New Mexico secondary students took at least one CTE course. However, about 30 percent reached concentrator status and 12 percent earned a credential, suggesting a gap between initial access and program completion. LESC staff analysis also found high schools with strong CTE participation spent about \$905 more per student on instruction than other high schools, while schools specializing in high-cost industries spent an average of \$1,592 more.

The proposed model combines base funding with incentives. Base awards would vary by school size and program quality, recognizing that smaller schools face fixed costs and stronger programs may require greater investment. Additional funding would be tied to students becoming CTE concentrators

(continued on back)

Implementation of New State Math Requirements

In 2026, the state enacted Laws 2026, Chapter 53 (Senate Bill 29), LESC-endorsed legislation to create a statewide framework to address math instruction. The law amended the School Personnel Act to increase requirements for educator preparation programs (EPPs), and the Mathematics and Science Education Act to create a mathematics instructional leadership framework, add requirements for math professional learning plans, and create a system of screening and family notification among kindergarten through third grade (K-3) students.

Under the new law, both the Public Education Department (PED) and EPPs must meet certain requirements in SY27. PED, in consultation with the Math and Science Advisory Council (MSAC), must promulgate rules to implement the new law by December 31, 2026. In addition, PED, in consultation

with MSAC, must develop a mathematics instructional leadership framework by December 31, 2026.

The department and MSAC have already started implementation. PED recently published initial draft guidance for the math instructional leadership guide, math professional learning plan, math intervention and support plan, and the early math screener.

According to PED, New Mexico stakeholders—including school leaders, teachers, parents, community members, and mathematics professional learning providers—are invited to review the materials and provide public comment, which runs through August.

Changes to the State Personnel Act require individuals seeking an elementary teaching license or secondary mathematics teaching endorsement to complete at least six hours of math methods courses, beginning July 1,

2028. PED has interpreted the law to also apply to early childhood teachers and special education teachers because these teachers may teach the same students as an elementary or secondary math teacher. To meet the 2028 deadline, EPPs must begin offering the courses to candidates by SY27, with institutional deadlines for updates to course catalogs in fall 2026.

EPP staff and faculty provided LESC staff with preliminary plans for providing the six credit hours of math methods courses. Most preparation programs will add three to six credit hours to graduation requirements, with secondary math preparation programs and postbaccalaureate alternative licensure certificate programs generally requiring the most additional credit hours.

LESC staff will present a brief with further details about planned implementation in Taos on July 17.

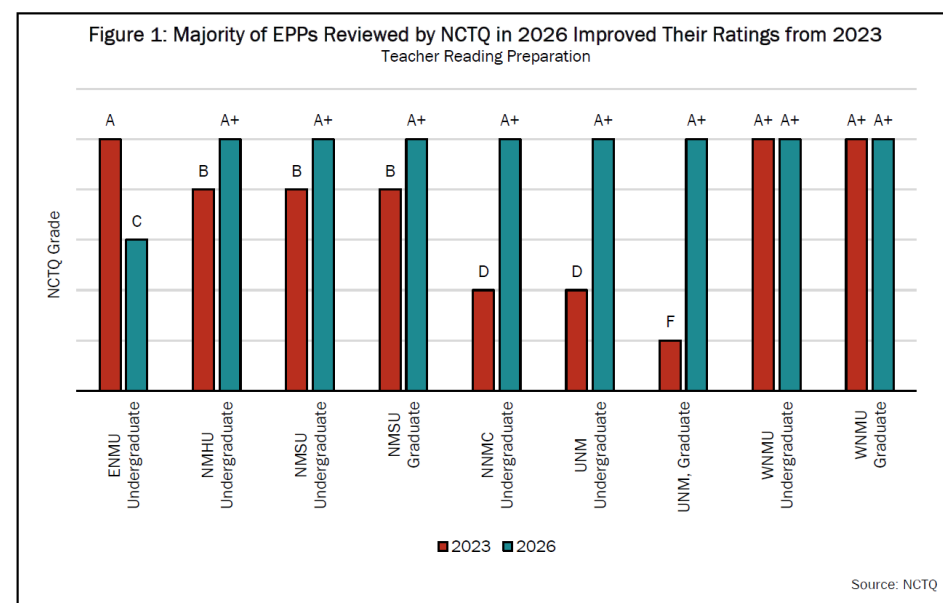
Career and Technical Education

(continued from front)

and earning industry credentials. This structure would reward progression and completion.

The proposal also presents important design questions. Small and rural schools may have fewer employers, instructors, and facilities to meet quality standards. The state would also need stronger data systems, clear rules for valuing credentials, and safeguards to ensure developing programs are supported. Even so, the framework gives lawmakers a starting point for moving CTE to a more predictable, accountable, and reliable funding mechanism.

National Report Finds Improvement in Preparing Teachers to Teach Reading



The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), a national research and policy organization, published a [2026 review](#) of how educator preparation programs across the country prepare teachers to teach reading. NCTQ found eight of the nine programs in New Mexico received an “A” for teacher reading preparation.

As shown in Figure 1, above, most programs saw notable improvement from a previous NCTQ [review](#) conducted in 2023. Even considering the improvement, NCTQ found many New Mexico elementary EPPs need to increase instructional time devoted to teaching teachers to support English learners, struggling readers, and speakers of English language varieties.

i n f o r m E D

July 2026

Published monthly in the interim by the
Legislative Education Study Committee
325 Don Gaspar, Suite 100
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 986-4591

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Entity/LESC/Default>

Jessica Hathaway
Editor

John Sena / Marit Andrews
Contributing Editors