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 While suicides were up overall in New Mexico in 2020, the Department of Health reports, the number among children under age 18 was unchanged at 26. A total of 520 New Mexicans died by suicide in 2020, five more than in 2019. New Mexico had the fourth highest age-adjusted rate for suicides in the nation in 2019, the most recent year for which U.S. data is available. New Mexico's crude suicide rate of 24.6 deaths per 100 thousand residents in 2020, was a 23 percent increase over 2010.



The Public Education Department has awarded \$14.7 million to New Mexico colleges and universities for their teacher residency programs, nearly all of the \$15.5 million available in the appropriation approved early this year. The eight schools receiving funds were all nearly fully funded. The programs plan to serve 374 teacher candidates, mostly students close to the end of their education who receive a stipend for teaching responsibilities in a public school and work closely with a mentor.



Year-to-date transfers to the lottery scholarship fund are down 13.8 percent from the same period last fiscal year. In March, the end of the third quarter of FY22, a total of \$30.1 million had been transferred to the fund that pays tuition for New Mexico high school graduates who qualify. March deposits of \$3.4 million were up from the February 2022 deposit of \$2.9 million. Lawmakers earlier this year allocated an extra \$130 million to the lottery scholarship fund.



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Senator William P. Soules, Chair / Representative G. Andrés Romero, Vice Chair / Gwen Perea Warniment, Director / June 2022

From the Chairman

Front of the Class

The evidence is overwhelming: Children of color do better in the classroom when the teacher is someone who looks like them. But in New Mexico, odds are the student will be a minority but the teacher will be white.

A third of New Mexico teachers but two-thirds of New Mexico students are Hispanic; 11 percent of the students are Native American but just 3 percent of the teachers.

Researchers say educators who reflect the students they teach likely make a difference by being role models and by presenting material in a more culturally relevant way, while lack of representation among teachers likely contributes to the achievement gap between students of color and non-Hispanic white students.

That achievement gap is central to the court's ruling in the *Martinez-Yazzie* lawsuit, and a key finding is that the achievement gap for Native American students is exacerbated by having too little access to culturally and linguistically relevant curricula. The Tribal Remedy Framework, an education plan put together in response to the lawsuit and endorsed by all 23 New Mexico tribes and pueblos, calls for a more diverse educator workforce as one approach to addressing the achievement gap for Native American students.

During the legislative session earlier this year, lawmakers mandated the minimum annual salary for an educator holding a Native American language and culture certificate match that of a level 1 licensed teacher. It was an important step forward in recognizing the value of Native American educators, but legislators must do more to get indigenous teachers into the classroom.

The Legislature must support and expand programs like Educators Rising's work with Laguna Pueblo to recruit local students as school interns, the Native educator mentorship program at the University of New Mexico, and the Cooperative Education Services' alternative licensure program for indigenous college graduates.

Studies show all students benefit from a diverse educator workforce, not just students of color. We know we must do better by Native American students, and we know, by doing so, we will benefit all New Mexico students.

Jemez Tribal Leaders Emphasize Ed Ownership

 Giving tribes and pueblos ownership over the education of Native American students would help those students succeed, but the state needs to help tribes overcome state and federal bureaucratic barriers, tribal leaders say.

At a full day of committee hearings at Jemez Pueblo, which included a tour of the pueblo's nationally recognized language immersion schools, educators and administrators from several pueblos said tribes have a better understanding of the educational needs of their children but face state and federal restrictions.

In opening remarks, Jemez Pueblo Governor Raymond Loretto said the pueblo is interested in the state's advice on curriculum and assessments but also needs the state's help working with federal regulators and overcoming restrictions to tribal authority over its education systems.

"Trails are blazed by the people who take the challenge," Loretto told the committee. "I want my staff to go further but there are restrictions until the state acts."

Kevin Shendo, Jemez Pueblo education director, said the bureaucracy surrounding tribal education is very fragmented, with support

coming from the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of Education, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

"All these different systems are not aligned on the federal level, and that doesn't include pulling in state systems for public and charter schools," he said.

Further, Lana Garcia, the pueblo's early childhood program manager, suggested the data-based assessment of students generally used by the state isn't the only way to measure student success.

"For me, success is what the child contributes. Success is in their real life. It's important that they do well in school but .. what we desire is to see our children dancing at our feasts," she said.

She told the story of boys from their Head Start program leading songs during the buffalo dance.

"It was so inspiring to see how strong, powerful, and confident and beautiful those boys looked. That's success," she said.

Materials provided by the pueblo outlined the pueblo's progress in developing its education system, including its establishment of two charter schools for kindergarten

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Teacher Pay Important but Conditions Play a Part

New Mexico, like many states, has focused on teacher pay as a way to improve recruitment and retention, but working conditions also play a factor, making school principals key players in building a stable, high-quality educator workforce, staff analysis indicates.

New Mexico's struggle with the educator workforce — schools were

short an estimated 1,000 teachers at the start of the 2021-2022 school year and national guardsman were called in as substitutes — will be the focus of three hearings scheduled for June 9 covering implementation of the teacher compensation package that raised the minimum pay for teachers at each licensing level by \$10 thousand a

year, factors influencing teacher retention, and school leadership challenges and support.

The teacher shortage leaves many students served by long-term substitutes who do not have teaching credentials, a staff brief notes, and a National Education Association survey found 55 percent of educators nationally are considering leaving the classroom earlier than expected.

New Mexico research supports reducing teacher attrition by strong preparation, high-quality leadership, targeted professional support, and competitive compensation. New Mexico has invested heavily in teacher residencies and other high-retention pathways into the career, Grow You Own programs that help educational assistants get teaching credentials, and teacher and principal professional learning.

National studies show schools with strong principals have higher than average teacher retention; however, in high-poverty schools, the principal turnover rate was 21 percent prior to the pandemic.

New Mexico's principal supports are fragmented and data on their impact on principal or teacher retention unavailable.

Tribes Look for Autonomy in Education

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through eighth grade and high school, as well as its Jemez-language-immersion early childhood program, Head Start, and pilot elementary programs, recently highlighted during a visit by the secretary of the federal Education Department.

Responding to questions from LESC Chair William Soules about how to recruit Native American educators to teach in tribal schools, Charlene Lucero of the Isleta Pueblo Department of Education said they recruit from native speakers among their families and have a six-week training program for them.

Patricia Sandoval, Laguna Pueblo Education Department superintendent, said the pueblo participates in Educators Rising, a statewide program that promotes education careers among high school students, and the state's Grow Your Own Teachers program, which pays the college tuition and provides professional leave for educational assistants seeking a teaching degree.

Jeremy Oyenque, director of Youth and Learning for Santa Clara Pueblo, said pueblos can work together to recruit Native American teachers.

"We are relying on each other as tribal communities," he said.

Although the pueblo lists its chartered schools among its successes, Shendo said the state should consider giving tribes the authority to charter their own public schools.

He said the the pueblo first chartered San Diego Riverside Charter School through the local school district but was unsuccessful with a second school — what eventually became Walatowa High, leading the pueblo to join those who successfully pushed to expand charter authorization to include the state Public Education Commission.

"We still aren't in control as much as we'd like. The standards and assessments are still defined by other entities. Now is the time to allow tribes to charter."

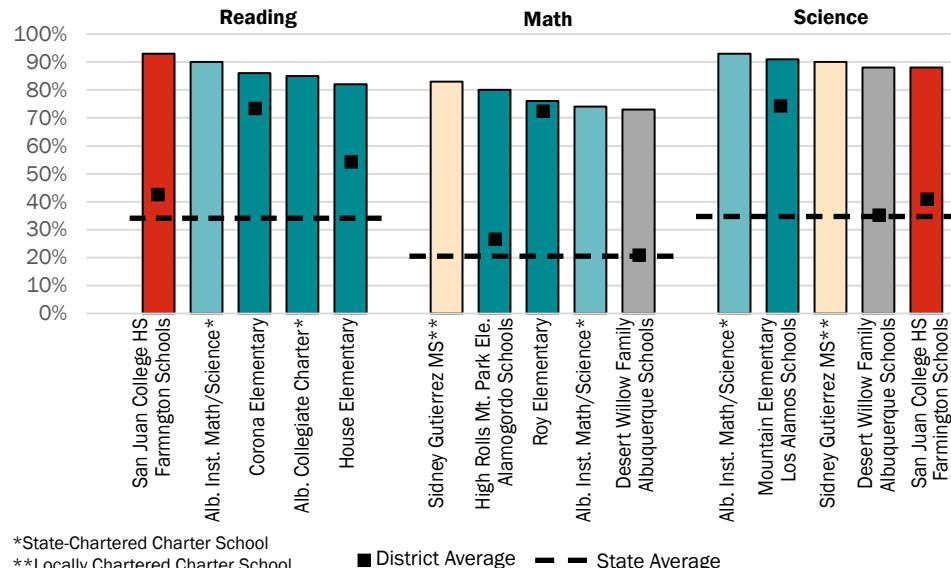
Top Schools Not Always in Best Districts

Reading, math, and science proficiency rates at New Mexico's top performing schools were up to four times the state averages for the 2018-2019 school year, the latest year for

which scores are available.

In addition, top performing schools in larger school districts generally reported scores substantially above the district averages.

Proficiency Rates of Top Performing Schools, 2018-2019 School Year



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*State-Chartered Charter School

**Locally Chartered Charter School

■ District Average - - - State Average