

B i t e - S i z e

🍏 PED announced the postponement of the public hearing for the department's proposed changes to NMAC 6.29.1 General Provisions. The new hearing date, which PED requested to "enlarge the public comment period to accommodate new proposed language in accordance with the rule," is January 10, 2025.

🍏 A newly updated report from Measure of America shows 15.3 percent of youth in New Mexico were disconnected in 2024, a term that refers to youth between the ages of 16 and 24 that are neither working nor in school. This is a notable improvement from the last reported rate of 19.6 percent in 2022.

🍏 October 2024 revenues transferred to the lottery tuition fund totaled \$3.68 million, roughly the same as September 2024 revenues of \$3.69 million. To date, FY25 proceeds total \$14.7 million compared with \$19.3 million in the same period last year, a decrease of 23.8 percent.



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Representative G. Andrés Romero, Chair / Senator William P. Soules, Vice Chair / John Sena, Director / December 2024

From the Chair

In light of recent election results at the federal level, there is a growing concern about the future of the U.S. Department of Education and the role the federal government plays in our schools here in New Mexico and across the country. New Mexico received approximately \$350 million dollars in federal funding for fiscal year 2025 (FY25). This equates to 8.3 percent of the overall state equalization guarantee (SEG). New Mexico's students would be adversely impacted should these funds be scaled back or eliminated.

The largest share (\$159 million) of this assistance to New Mexico schools is through Title I. Title I is a discretionary program aimed at providing supplemental assistance to school districts to help children from low-income families. Districts around the state rely on these federal dollars to provide enrichment opportunities for students, professional development opportunities for educators and increase parental and community involvement, all with the goal of shrinking the achievement gap between students based on income.

Another area the federal government provides much needed funding and support to our state is through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Last fiscal year, we received \$109 million from the federal government to bolster special education services for our students.

The issue of federal and state partnership is not, and should not be, a partisan issue, nor is it a rural versus urban issue. The federal government is a welcome partner in helping educate all students here in New Mexico and their collaboration helps enrich our public schools and children for whom we are all cheering.

PED FY26 Public School Support Request

The Public Education Department (PED) recently released its FY26 public school support request, which Secretary Designate Padilla will present to LESC on Thursday, December 19. PED's FY26 budget request represents a 4.4 percent increase to the general fund and all funds, not including compensation. In terms of recurring impact to the general fund, there is a 5 percent increase, an impact of \$221.3 million annually. In its FY26 request, PED moved several budget items to recurring funding, including high-dosage tutoring; science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM); out-of-school time; community schools; school safety; micro-credentials for teachers; and its learning management system. In terms of nonrecurring funding, PED asked for a 41.8 percent increase for FY26, an impact of \$58.8 million to the general fund.

According to PED, its FY26 budget request reflects the agency's continued focus on advancing equity and excellence in education for every student in New Mexico. Many of PED's FY26 budget priorities are also reflected in LESC's proposed FY26 budget, for example funding for educator clinical practice including teacher

residencies, data systems including a statewide learning management system with a unified individualized education program (IEP), continued structured literacy training and the summer reading program, out-of-school time and tutoring, and career connected learning. While PED has not yet released its proposed compensation increase for FY26, the department has indicated it will likely be in line with either LESC's proposed compensation increase (3 percent) or the compensation increase proposed by the Legislative Finance Committee (4 percent).

The FY26 public school support recommendations from PED and LESC do have differences. Notably, the PED budget recommendation does not include LESC's proposed revisions to the state equalization guarantee (SEG). Other differences include diverging recommendations for student and family support; the Bilingual Multicultural, Hispanic, and Black Education Acts; and the Indian education fund.

PED has also submitted its agency budget request for FY26, a proposed 12.2 percent increase from its FY25 agency budget. PED asked for an increase in staff at PED including an expansion request for

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Preventing Sexual Misconduct in Schools

Sexual misconduct in schools is a serious public health issue, but it is also preventable. Child sexual abuse and misconduct in kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) schools is pervasive; data from the U.S. Department of Education estimates the prevalence of educator sexual misconduct at 9.6 percent nationally. In New Mexico, data from the New Mexico Public Schools Insurance Authority (NMPSIA) indicates child sexual abuse has been an increasing burden on K-12 schools in the state, both in terms of educator sexual misconduct and student-on-student sexual misconduct.

Research indicates students who suffer sexual misconduct experience more difficulties in social emotional functioning, increased alcohol and drug use, suicide attempts, coercive sexual experiences, and lower levels of psychological flourishing. In addition,

increasing NMPSIA claims present a financial challenge for both the agency and the state.

In the past 10 years, educator sexual misconduct has cost New Mexico over \$73.2 million, and student on student sexual misconduct has cost the state over \$19.8 million. It's important to note claim costs could rise, as claims can take years to settle. Of the 129 educator sexual misconduct claims over the past 10 years, 106 are closed, and 23 remain open.

NMPSIA provides a variety of services to prevent sexual misconduct in K-12 schools. Included in these efforts are some of the requirements introduced in Laws 2021, Chapter 94 (House Bill 128), which created preventative and responsive measures to address ethical and sexual misconduct by public school employees. NMPSIA provides training for staff, students, and parents

on boundaries and ethical misconduct; human resources audits and training for school districts and charter schools; and the anonymous reporting tool STOPit.

However, work remains to ensure uniform implementation of Laws 2021, Chapter 94 by schools across the state. According to NMPSIA, reference checks should be improved and investigations of sexual misconduct can be inadequate. NMPSIA also reports they have found a lack of willingness on the part of school employees to report sexual misconduct.

The Legislature, PED, and school districts and charter schools all have a role to play in preventing child sexual abuse. NMPSIA and LESC staff will discuss current NMPSIA data on sexual misconduct in New Mexico schools, current work to keep students safe, and policy recommendations for lawmakers, PED, and schools at the LESC meeting on Wednesday, December 18.

PED FY26 Budget Request

(continued from front)

15 new FTE, special appropriations requests for *Martinez-Yazzie* legal expenses and data quality supports, an FY25 supplemental request for funding to maintain Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) positions through FY25, and an appropriation for rent for PED offices in Albuquerque and Las Cruces.

LESC staff and PED will both present proposed FY26 public school support budgets to LESC on Thursday, December 19.

Multiple On-Ramps to Careers in Education

On-Ramp 1: High School

- Near Peer Tutoring
- After School Tutoring and Clubs
- Community Partners: Educators Rising, Golden Apple Scholars, Future Focused Ed., Youth Apprenticeship
- Dual Credit Pathways to College and Teaching

On-Ramp 4: Career Changers & Alternative Candidates

- Tuition support
- Ed. Fellows: EA salary and benefits while working toward degree
- Golden Apple Scholars
- Student Teaching/Paid Residency Apprenticeship

On-Ramp 2: Undergraduate Degrees

- Tuition free degree in Education
- Ed. Fellows: EA salary and benefits while working toward degree
- Golden Apple Scholars
- Student Teaching/Paid Residency Apprenticeship

On-Ramp 3: Graduate Degrees

- Tuition support
- Ed. Fellows: EA salary and benefits while working toward degree
- Golden Apple Scholars
- Student Teaching/Paid Residency Apprenticeship



Source: PED

Through sustained legislative investments combined with comprehensive programmatic efforts at PED and in educator preparation programs, New Mexico is building a professional teaching pipeline that supports equity, excellence, and sustainability. Since FY19, the Legislature has appropriated \$147 million to educator clinical practice experiences, which includes a variety of ways to make sure future teachers gain quality experiences in schools as part of their teacher training: paid teacher residencies, paid student teaching, and an Educator Fellows program.

By linking affordability, accessibility, and high-quality preparation, the state aims to build a resilient educator ecosystem that will benefit students, teachers, and communities, ensuring a stronger future education workforce and better student outcomes. This approach is showing promise, with New Mexico being recognized as a national leader, particularly in teacher residency programs.

Over the past three years 3,345 newly prepared teachers have graduated from New Mexico educator preparation programs. Since 2021, approximately 250 graduates have been supported through the Educator Fellows program and more than 800 have completed teacher residencies, committing them to teach in local districts for at least three years.

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