




B i t e - S i z e

 Nearly 25 percent of \$28 million appropriated to Public Education Department special projects remained uncommitted at the end of November, five months into the fiscal year. In addition to the \$5.5 million in unencumbered “below-the-line” funds, so called because they fall outside the pool distributed to schools through a formula, \$1.4 million has been designated for a purpose, but the state has not yet finalized a contract.

 The U.S. Department of Education’s new CARES Act online portal shows New Mexico had spent \$53 million, or 26 percent, of the \$203 million awarded in education stabilization funds as of September 30. Higher education institutions had spent 66 percent of the \$72 million awarded for emergency relief, while elementary and secondary schools reported spending only \$5 million of \$108 million awarded. The portal did not include information on \$23 million allocated to the Governor’s Office.

 The Early Childhood Education and Care Department will continue to waive the family co-payment for the subsidized care provided through the Childcare Assistance Program. The department has notified providers the state will cover the amount the providers would have received from parents or guardians in addition to the regular state subsidy. Families that have already made the co-payment will receive a refund, the department says.



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Representative Christine Trujillo, Chair / Senator Mimi Stewart, Vice Chair / Rachel S. Gudgel, Director / December 2020

From the Chairwoman

Front Line

We know that schools closures have hurt our children. We know that schools closures have hurt the economy, with parents surrendering work hours to childcare and home schooling. We know school closures have placed additional pressures on families already dealing with a crumbling economy and social isolation. We need to reopen the schools safely and soon, but we can’t do it by risking the lives of our teachers and staff. We need to put school employees near the front of the line for the Covid-19 vaccine.

The cost of the school closures on children has been almost unfathomable: Students have lost months of learning time, with struggling students left the furthest behind. Thousands of children are “missing” from New Mexico schools and as many as four in five are failing at least one class. Child abuse reports are down but only because it’s happening out of sight of the teachers who are primary reporters. Untold numbers of children with developmental and physical disabilities are going undiagnosed and without services usually provided by the schools. Teachers want to get back into the classroom. Administrators want to reopen school doors to all children. The state must provide a safe path for making that happen.

We now have much more information about the role of schools and children in the transmission of Covid-19, and we know that some schools have opened safely. But we also know children can spread the disease without feeling sick, and schools that ignored the science – foregoing masks and social distancing – contributed to large outbreaks. We also know, with most transmission adult-to-adult, it is unsafe to open schools, no matter what precautions are in place, if the pandemic is surging in the community.

Organizations representing 10 million teachers, superintendents, school counselors, parents, school boards, and principals recently co-signed a letter urging the vaccination of teachers and pointing out that those vaccinations could reassure families and the public of the safety of the vaccine. New Mexico’s children need to get back to school sooner rather than later. Prioritizing the vaccination of school staff will help make that happen.



Nontraditional Teachers Struggle with Support

More of New Mexico’s teachers are coming from alternative preparation programs than traditional programs, but traditional graduates report a greater commitment to teaching, an education reform group concludes.

Rachel Boren, director of the Southwest Outreach Academic Research Evaluation and Policy Center at New Mexico State University, [told the committee](#) during a hearing in November that 61 percent of those who started an educator preparation program in 2019-2020 and 60 percent of those who finished attended an alternative program.

However, Kersti Tyson, director of evaluation and learning for the Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation, [told the committee in November](#) that a survey conducted with Learning Alliance New Mexico found teachers from traditional educator preparation programs are more likely to stay on the job and reported being more satisfied than other respondents.

Catron Allred, director of teacher education at Central New Mexico Community College, told the committee during a separate hearing on the [legislative priorities of the New Mexico Association](#)

[of Colleges of Teacher Education](#) that school districts do too little to help alternative program graduates, who leave because of the lack of support and isolation.

Alternatively licensed teachers need more in-classroom support and modeling, she said. Among the association’s policy priorities are co-teaching or residency programs to support alternatively licensed teachers during their first year of teaching.

Tyson said educators teaching in their home communities are more likely to stay in the job longer and more likely to obtain certificates for bilingual education and teaching English as a second language and report being more comfortable with bilingual students.

But, she said, 30 percent of teachers and most new teachers are hesitant to encourage students to pursue a teaching career, and among the 76 percent of surveyed students who said they planned to attend college, just 3 percent said they are considering an education major.

Low pay, lack of respect, and adults who discouraged are among the reasons students said

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Unused Extended Learning Funds Feed Reform

Slow implementation of programs that add instructional time to the school day and school year has resulted in a \$170 million pool of money now available for additional education reform projects ranging from school accountability to cybersecurity.

The committee is scheduled to hear more about how much has reverted to the public education reform fund and how it's being used during a hearing at 10:30 a.m. on December 16.

The fund is the repository for unused appropriations to the K-5 Plus extended school year program and other programs that provide additional instructional time – all optional – and can be used for a variety of evidence-supported education initiatives, including those concerning quality teaching and school leadership, interventions for at-risk students, effective school admin-

istration, and school accountability.

Over FY20 and FY21, \$347.4 million was appropriated to K-5 Plus and the extended school day and school hour approaches grouped together under the name Extended Learning Time Programs. Schools used about \$44 million for K-5 Plus and \$108 million on other extended learning over the two years, reverting about \$195 million to the reform fund.

The Legislature appropriated about \$23 million from the reform fund in FY21 for career and technical education, culturally and linguistically diverse instructional materials, the educator evaluation system, teacher residencies, cybersecurity and panic buttons, data systems, and other projects.

A little over \$170 million will be available in the fund for FY22.

In FY20, the first year following the *Martinez-Yazzie* court ruling that found New Mexico's public schools were unconstitutionally insufficient, New Mexico's Legislature appropriated enough funding to the public schools to allow all high-need elementary schools to participate in K-5 Plus and for one-third of all schools to participate in Extended Learning Time Programs.

The appropriation was a response to a court finding that the Legislature had underfunded effective extended learning programs like K-5 Plus, which adds 25 days to the school year and has been shown to improve the performance of struggling students through high school.

However, not all school districts and charter schools were prepared to offer the programs – some argued conditions intended to ensure K-5 Plus programs were implemented effectively were too restrictive – and two-thirds of the money reverted to the reform fund.

The Legislature earmarked the appropriations to set a baseline that would ensure funding would be available in future years, and set up the reform fund to keep the dollars in education.

Alternatively Licensed Teachers

continued from front

they were not interested in teaching careers, Tyson said.

To increase the number of teachers who choose careers in their hometowns, the foundation and Learning Alliance recommend the state launch a campaign to strengthen respect for teachers, develop and expand programs to recruit Northern New Mexico high school students to pursue teaching, and provide scholarships and stipends that encourage students to return to their home regions after earning their degrees and licenses.

In addition, teacher preparation programs should foster partnerships with Northern New Mexico schools to recruit, support, and mentor community teachers and promote best

practices in culturally and linguistically responsive classroom practices.

Finally, the partnership promotes efforts to strengthen school leadership and broaden teacher professional learning opportunities.

Disabilities Increase Risk of Use of Restraints

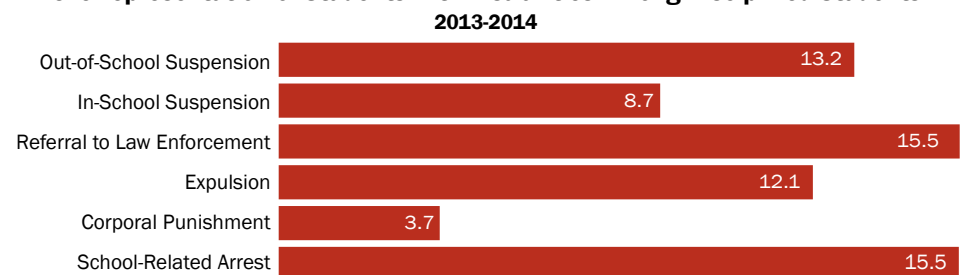
While nationally students with disabilities represented 11.7 percent of all public school students during the 2013-2014 school year, they were 76 percent of all students physically restrained, 34 percent of those mechanically restrained, and 59 percent of those secluded, according to the federal General Accounting Office.

The [2019 report](#) based on U.S. Education Department Civil Data Collection information found reports of restraint are rare but students with disabilities are "particularly overrepresented."

The [GAO reported in 2018](#) that students with disabilities, along with boys and Black students, are also overrepresented among students disciplined with suspensions and other approaches.

Although the same analysis has not been done for New Mexico schools, the Public Education Department [reported to the committee in September](#) that students with disabilities represented slightly over 30 percent of in-school and out-of-school suspensions in 2019, while students with disabilities were about 17.4 percent of total school enrollment.

Overrepresentation of Students with Disabilities Among Disciplined Students



Percentage Point Difference With Representation Among All Students (Overrepresentation)

Source: General Accounting Office, GAO-18-258

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