

B i t e s i z e

 New Mexico's child poverty rate improved in 2017, moving from 30.1 percent to 27.2 percent, U.S. Census Bureau data shows. The improvement moved New Mexico from having the highest child poverty rate to having the second highest, one place behind Louisiana. The 2017 rate is also lower than New Mexico's 29.3 percent average for the last five years.

 Revenues to the lottery tuition fund for the first two months of the fiscal year that started in July are down 23 percent from the first two months of last fiscal year. The amount generated through sales of lottery tickets in July and August was \$6.2 million, compared with \$8 million raised during those months in 2017. The total in the lottery tuition fund is estimated at \$719 million. The state spent \$36.8 million on lottery scholarships in the 2017-2018 school year.

 The Public School Insurance Authority is considering steps to encourage public schools to implement a mental wellness program promoted by the national nonprofit Sandy Hook Promise. The group, created after the school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, provides free resources and training for a program that teaches teachers and students how to minimize social isolation, assess and respond to threats of violence, and recognize signs of depression and suicide.



i n f o r m E D

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Senator Mimi Stewart, Chair / Representative G. Andrés Romero, Vice Chair / Rachel S. Gudgel, Director / October 2018

From the Chairwoman

Portable Magic

Long before the Internet, books let us explore the world, meet new people, and learn new things. Lewis Carroll took us to Wonderland and invited us to create wonders of our own. Roald Dahl introduced us to irreverence and the idea that things aren't always what they seem. *Black Beauty* taught us empathy, and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* taught us redemption.

Books are indeed, as author Stephen King says, "uniquely portable magic," and it is magic how books can transform children. Studies show a good school library, managed by a quality librarian, can help the entire school succeed, no matter the socio-economic status of its students. Books enhance concentration, exercise the brain, reduce stress, cultivate critical thinking, and improve vocabulary and writing.

Self-selected books engage students, connect them to the world around them, and make school and learning more exciting. Books at the right level for the reader – "decodable" books – build confidence and skills. Diverse books let diverse students see themselves and teach others tolerance. Books about hope and resilience give hope and teach resilience to children who have suffered adversity and trauma.

Yet, New Mexico school librarians told the committee during a hearing in September that library funding and the number of certified librarians in schools have dropped as the use of digital media and technology has increased. While digital books are valuable, they should not supplant physical books. And while a clerk can scan a book code and mark it as checked out or checked in, only a qualified librarian knows the collection and the classroom curriculum and can put the right book in the hands of a child. As one elementary school librarian told us, "We teach our students how to be inquiring learners, and we teach them how to evaluate and use print and digital resources efficiently, effectively, and ethically."

Most of all, school librarians and a library with a good selection of books, whether delivered in pixels or print, teach our children to love books and reading, a love that will serve them throughout their lives no matter what paths they take.

Senator Mimi Stewart

Equity Must Include Needs of Whole Child

Schools in trouble need help, not punishment, and the best way to help struggling schools is by removing the barriers that keep some students from learning, says a leading researcher on the influence of socioeconomic conditions and demographic trends on education.

Pedro Noguera, Ph.D., a professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies and author of 12 books, said poverty is not a learning disability but poor students can't succeed if schools ignore their needs.

Noguera, who spoke to the committee during their September meeting, said the concept of equity is misunderstood as meaning schools must provide all students with equal resources but equity must involve providing schools with the resources they need to address the specific needs of each child.

During his presentation, "[Equity from the Get Go: Giving All Students a Fair Shot](#)," Noguera said educators need to acknowledge and address the different needs of students; address the academic, social, and psychological needs that arise from inequality in soci-

ety; and commit to fair treatment, acting as advocates for equity.

However, he said, state education departments have not figured out how to help failing schools.

"We have much evidence that it takes more than pressure and threats to improve schools," he said. Firing staff and blaming the children and their families are ineffective.

Instead, he said, the focus should be on how to help the school improve. In effect, administrators should work on creating new, successful schools from the failing school.

Noguera said research by the University of Chicago has identified five essential ingredients for school improvement: a coherent instructional system, ongoing development of teacher skills with skills aligned with student needs, strong parent and community ties, a student-centered learning environment that allows for concrete conversations about student needs, and shared leadership.

Toronto, what Noguera called the highest performing urban school system in the western hemisphere, uses data to identify

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Reform Primed by Medical Science, Research

Advances in brain science and extensive experience with educational approaches make now the right time to create school environments that successfully support the emo-

tional and academic needs of students and foster learning and creativity, an educational researcher specializing in safe and supportive schools and student mental health says.

David Osher, Ph.D., vice president and fellow at the American Institutes of Research, is scheduled to testify before the committee at 9 a.m. on October 23 on creating the conditions in schools necessary for learning.

Schools Need Help, Not Punishment

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the weaknesses in failing schools and then provides the schools with the resources needed to succeed.

He said schools need additional resources because teachers are often called on to act as social workers and psychologists, “roles they are not qualified to perform.”

Schools need resources to address the needs of the whole child, looking beyond academic needs to the child’s social and emotional needs.

As an example, he said addressing the underlying cause of a student’s misbehavior can save the school from facing the dilemma of whether to suspend a child who will see suspension as a reward.

The solution is identifying and addressing the cause of the behavior problem.

Schools and states need to start using data more effectively.

“We know how to rank kids, but we don’t know how to help them once they’ve been ranked,” he said.

In turn, many teacher evaluation systems discourage teachers from working with high-need kids.

Similarly, school grading systems promote competition and discourage schools from sharing effective

approaches.

The smart use of data allows a school to diagnose needs, intervene early, and identify successful practices.

“We have been focused on the wrong question. We have been focused on raising achievement, when we should be focused on how to get kids excited about learning,” Noguera said.

Asked by committee members for advice on how New Mexico should develop a plan required under a district court ruling that found New Mexico schools are failing to provide an adequate education to all students, Noguera said the approach must be bipartisan and should be careful not to “throw money out too quickly.”

Funding should be focused on those schools with sustainable strategies for addressing specific needs.

In the draft of the forward for an upcoming book on safe and supportive schools, Osher says “lucky” students feel like they belong and can succeed and experience challenging and engaging educational opportunities.

But, he notes, those environments are available to only some students some of the time.

However, advances in neurology, developmental and learning science over the past decade, coupled with an accumulation of practice-based research, have created a “unique opportunity” to develop programs and policies that will help ensure every student is engaged and thrives.

Osher writes that a safe, supportive, and engaging school environment provides a student with the skills and mindset needed for lifelong success.

Osher is principal investigator for national centers on school safety, mental health, and the education of children at risk of abuse and neglect.

Interactive Atlas Offers Insights

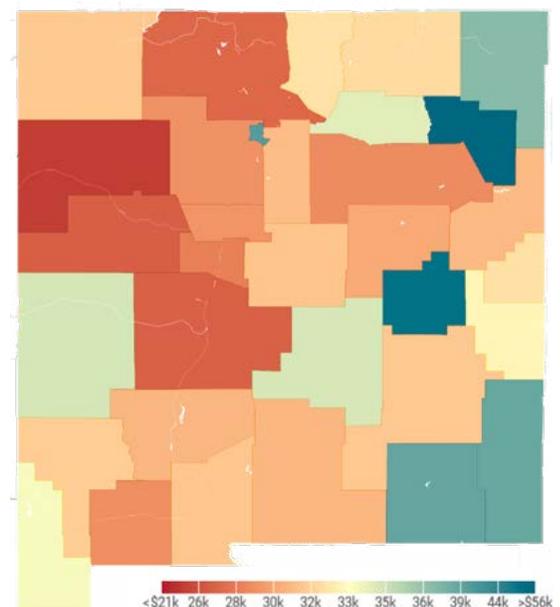
A collaborative effort by the U.S. Census Bureau and Harvard and Brown universities has resulted in an interactive map that identifies which neighborhoods offer children the best chance to rise out of poverty.

The [Opportunity Atlas](#) uses data culled from 20 million Americans tracked from childhood to their mid-30s.

The interactive map allows users to see income, number of children, mobility, graduation rates, weekly work hours, and a myriad of other characteristics on a neighborhood level.

Map developers say the map can help identify areas where opportunities are missing and help local policymakers develop solutions for childhood poverty.

Opportunity Atlas
Per Capita Income in New Mexico



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