




B i t e - S i z e

 The number of homeschool students has nearly returned to prepandemic levels this school year, after nearly doubling during school closures. According to Public Education Department data, the number of students registered for homeschooling rose to 16,009 in the 2020-2021 school year, from 8,862 the year before, but has dropped this school year to 9,466—6.8 percent higher than before the pandemic.

 With large uncommitted balances in the public school capital outlay fund, the Public School Capital Outlay Council has approved a second round of systems-based and standards-based awards for public schools construction, including awards for prekindergarten classrooms and demolition of abandoned school buildings. The council has also approved a 2 percent increase in the maximum per-student amount for charter school lease assistance, which will increase to about \$762 in FY22.

 The Public Education Department is asking for a 33 percent increase in its administration budget in FY23, to \$21.3 million from the general fund from the \$16.5 million it is spending on administration this fiscal year, a figure slightly higher than appropriations because the department has diverted \$1.9 million intended for programs to operations. The FY23 request includes 33 new positions, mostly in response to the *Martinez-Yazzie* education quality lawsuit.



i n f o r m E D

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Senator William P. Soules, Chair / Representative G. Andrés Romero, Vice Chair / Vanessa K. Hawker, Acting Director / October 2021

From the Chairman

Effective Investment

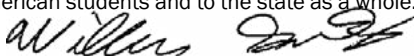
New Mexico didn't need the *Martinez-Yazzie* education quality lawsuit to know we were falling short on educating Native American children. Indeed, the Indian Education Act, mandating an Indian Education Division and creating the Indian education fund, was enacted almost a decade ago. But, despite our best intentions, progress has been slow.

We know culturally and linguistically relevant instruction matters. Study after study finds children are more likely to succeed when their language and customs are part of the curriculum. Experts say students are at risk of disengaging from learning when the curriculum fails to reflect what they know and value. More surprisingly, an in-depth study found academic performance improves for both immigrants and nonimmigrant students as the percentage of immigrant students in the classroom increases, even when other factors are controlled for. One experiment found "complex thinking" improved; another found better reading comprehension.

We know representation in the classroom matters. One study of more than 100 thousand students in North Carolina found Black students who had a Black teacher between third and fifth grade were significantly more likely to graduate from high school and go to college.

We know these things but our efforts have been stymied. Without casting blame—there is plenty to share—the promise of the Indian Education Act has not been fulfilled. The Indian education assistant secretary position mandated by the act is often empty; much of the money in the Indian education fund is untouched. And questions remain on whether the act and other current approaches can ever be effective or whether a different approach is needed altogether.

The committee will be discussing strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers, particularly teachers of color, during two hearings this month and intends to endorse some approaches, possibly by the next legislative session. Undoubtedly, we need to do more for Native American students, who trail statewide averages in rates of attendance, high school graduation, and reading and math proficiency. But we need to do it effectively. All parties, from the Legislature, to the Public Education Department, to the school districts and charter schools, to the pueblos, tribes, and nations must be held accountable for providing programs we know help students succeed. We owe that, to Native American students and to the state as a whole.



LESC Explores Strategies for Teacher Staffing

The Covid-19 pandemic likely affected teaching staff quantity and quality, but how remains to be seen, LESC analysis indicates.

In materials prepared for a subcommittee discussion on teacher preparation scheduled for 1 p.m. October 5, LESC staff notes the overall impact of the pandemic on public school staffing is still unknown, but educator vacancies appear to have increased by more than 80 percent between fall 2020 and fall 2021.

Educational Retirement Board data also indicates higher-than-typical retirements at the end of the fiscal year in June.

Staff reports the 2018 ruling in the *Martinez-Yazzie* education quality lawsuit identified well-trained staff as essential to a high-quality education and found certain groups of New Mexico students do not have access to high-quality teachers.

LESC has been studying how to improve teacher preparation since 2017, shortly after the National Conference of State Legislatures released *No Time to Lose*, which listed high-quality teachers among the key elements of the world's best education systems.

In the materials prepared for the discussion, staff outlines 12 strate-

gies for building a quality teacher workforce that policymakers should consider implementing or expanding. Among those strategies:

Student Teaching: New Mexico law requires teacher candidates to complete 16 weeks of student teaching; however, student teaching experiences in high-performing countries are longer. Paying student teachers and increasing funding for teacher residencies, which have longer student teaching periods, could improve the student teaching experience, as could mandating longer student teaching experiences, LESC analysts suggests.

Teacher Residencies: The state has funded teacher residencies, classroom apprenticeships with master teachers, since FY20, although only for post-graduate teacher candidates. Programs have struggled with implementation, indicating a need to identify barriers to success and consider expanding residency program to undergraduates and allowing for residencies to serve as an additional pathway to licensure.

Alternative Licensure: More teachers are entering New Mexico classrooms through alternative licensure programs than traditional teacher preparation programs, but

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Middle School Students Need Broad Supports

Middle school students, no longer in need of as much guidance as elementary school students but not yet ready for the independence of emerging adults, need strong social-emotional and academic supports, middle school educators and administrators told the committee during a hearing in August.

In [presentations](#) on helping middle school students succeed, the administrators from Ernie Pyle and Garfield STEM middle schools in Albuquerque and a New Mexico teacher of the year from Ortiz Middle School in Santa Fe emphasized caring for the whole child and introducing potential career paths.

Stacia Duarte, Ernie Pyle principal, told the committee the school focuses

on three strategies: actively engaging students and families, supporting the whole child and family, and developing relationships.

As an example of engagement, Duarte said the school uses the “one school, one book” program in which the entire reads a book together, available in both Spanish and English, and participates in trivia and family activities.

The school conducts a community needs assessment and works with community partners to provide additional family supports, including a food pantry, clothing closet, laundry facilities, and programming aimed at adults, such as financial literacy.

To build relationships, cultural

responsiveness is built into the curriculum, instruction is sensitive to trauma, and discipline is directed to restorative practices.

Joshua LaClair, assistant principal at Garfield STEM, said restorative justice is also part of the practices at the middle school. The school incorporates the philosophy of “habits of mind,” a set of problem-solving and life-related skills intended to provide students with the ability to think strategically with insightfulness, perseverance, creativity, and craftsmanship.

The two Albuquerque administrators concluded by saying the Legislature should focus middle schools on emotional growth, with less focus on content requirements but without losing academic rigor.

The community school model should be promoted and funded for middle schools, and funding should support smaller class sizes. In addition, middle school teachers should be required to have specific coursework in middle school approaches.

Stephanie Gurule-Leyba, the Ortiz Middle School teacher who was 2017 New Mexico teacher of the year, added that middle schools should introduce career options to help students aspire to careers. She said waiting until high school to explore biomedical and health science careers, her specialty, is too late.

LESC Explores Teacher Prep Strategies

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alternative-licensed teachers leave the profession at faster rates, contributing to turnover and impacting teacher quality. Promoting and funding effective mentorship programs, also needed for teachers moving up the career ladder, and requiring longer student teaching and coursework in behavior management and education philosophies could better prepare alternative-licensed teachers for the classroom.

Program Capacity and Supports: Educator preparation programs report faculty capacity has been a barrier to program offerings, including the ability to prepare bilingual teachers. Preparation programs are working to improve the ability of students to transfer among schools without losing credits.

National Board Certification: Research shows teachers with National

Board certification are more effective. the Legislature has provided additional funding in the formula to provide pay differentials for board-certified teachers and recently funded a scholarship program to support teachers going through the process.

In addition to the subcommittee discussion, the full committee is scheduled to hold a hearing at 11 a.m. October 5 on teacher quantity and quality with administrators of teacher education programs.

Elementary, Special Ed Vacancies Still Lead

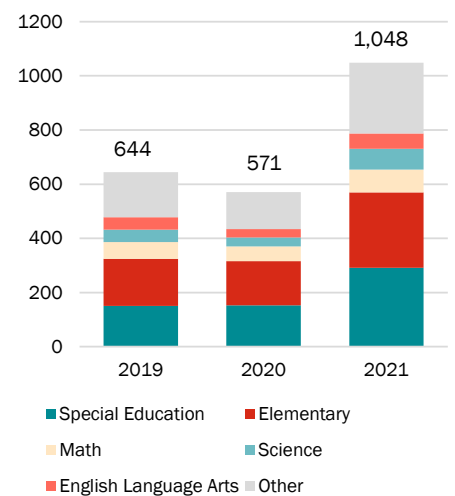
Vacancies among elementary school and special education teachers continue to dominate the annual report on educator vacancies prepared by the Southwest Outreach Academic Research Evaluation and Policy Center, or SOAR, based at New Mexico State University.

The report, based on a snapshot of vacancies posted by school districts statewide, finds vacancies among special education and elementary school teachers together have represented about half of all vacancies in each of the last three school years.

SOAR reports total vacancies grew from 571 in fall 2020 to 1,048 in fall 2021, with the largest percentage growth among health and physical education, music, social studies, and Spanish teaching positions.

While the highest need is in the Albuquerque region, districts with high populations of Native American students are also struggling with hiring teachers.

Teaching Position Vacancies



Source: SOAR

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