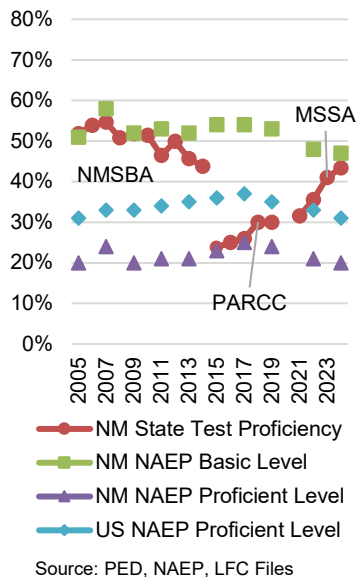


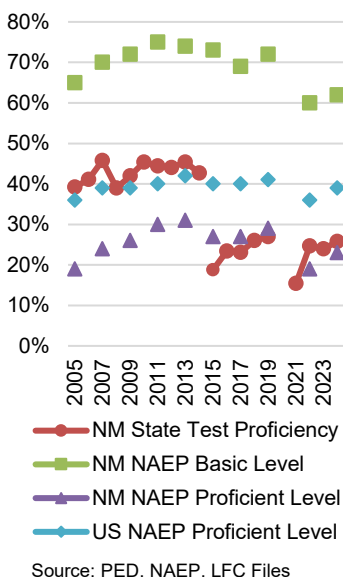
ACTION PLAN

Submitted by agency?	Yes
Timeline assigned?	Yes
Responsibility assigned?	Yes

Reading Proficiency of 4th Graders



Math Proficiency of 4th Graders



Public Schools

In the second quarter, the Public Education Department (PED) continued to process reimbursements and budget adjustment requests within their targets but did not complete any formula audits. PED also released test score performance information for 2024, alongside national assessment results. New Mexico's 2024 national test scores remain among the lowest in the country, with one of the measures—20 percent of fourth graders proficient in reading—being 10 points below the national average. These national scores tell a different story from the state's Measures of Student Success and Achievement (MSSA) assessment, which reports 43 percent of fourth graders are proficient in 2024. The discrepancy between the national and state tests reflect broader national debates on proficiency standards; however, the bigger issue is student achievement has dropped down to levels reported two decades ago. High chronic absenteeism (35 percent of fourth graders, 43 percent of eighth graders) and poverty rates are correlated with low scores, but some states have beat these odds by implementing evidence-based and targeted policies.

Student Outcomes

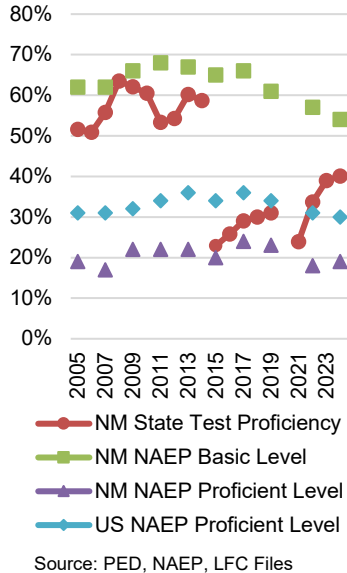
National Assessment of Educational Progress. New Mexico students continue to have some of the lowest reading and math proficiency levels in the U.S., according to the 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores released in January. Often called the Nation's Report Card, NAEP is the only nationwide assessment, administered biennially to a representative sample of fourth and eighth graders and is often used to rank educational performance across states.

New Mexico's NAEP scores remain consistently below national averages across all subjects and grades, though the trends mirror national patterns. For instance, 20 percent of New Mexico's fourth graders scored proficient or above in reading—10 percentage points behind the national average. This is not statistically different from 2022, when 21 percent of the state's fourth graders were proficient, trailing the national average by 11 percentage points. These results are virtually identical to performance in 2005. In math, New Mexico's fourth graders improved their scores by three points, similar to the national two-point increase. Eighth grade reading and math scores remained statistically unchanged from 2022. However, across all grades and subjects, both in New Mexico and nationally, scores remain below pre-pandemic levels and have generally fallen to the same level from two decades ago.

PED reports the state's Measures of Student Success and Achievement (MSSA) test, administered to students in grades 3-8, provides a more accurate reflection of statewide achievement. The 2024 MSSA results indicate 43 percent of fourth graders are proficient or advanced in reading—more than double the 20 percent proficiency reported by NAEP. Additionally, while MSSA math scores remain flat, reading scores have improved for most grades for the third consecutive year.

PED notes that NAEP's "basic" performance level more closely aligns with the proficiency standards in New Mexico's Common Core, which they say are not measured by NAEP but are by the MSSA. However, New Mexico's NAEP performance for both "basic" and "proficient" achievement have remained relatively flat or worsened over the

Reading Proficiency of 8th Graders



last two decades. Further confounding the results are New Mexico's three different state assessments (NMSBA, PARCC, and MSSA) administered during this period, which show contrasting outcomes compared with the NAEP.

A National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) study found New Mexico is not alone—many states set their proficiency standards at levels corresponding to NAEP's "basic" achievement category. Proponents argue state tests are better suited to measure student achievement within local contexts. However, critics highlight the "proficiency gap," which emerges when state assessments report significantly higher proficiency rates than NAEP. This gap raises concerns that lower state standards may not accurately reflect students' preparedness for academic and economic success.

For example, research indicates students scoring below basic on NAEP often struggle with foundational skills. Fourth graders in this category may have difficulty recognizing common words and decoding new ones, while eighth graders may struggle with identifying a passage's main idea. In math, eighth graders scoring below basic often have difficulty with fundamental concepts like ratios and unit conversions. Eighth grade math performance is also considered a strong predictor of a state's future economic growth.

Chronic Absenteeism and Poverty. PED has pointed to New Mexico's high rates of chronic absenteeism and poverty as key challenges. While absenteeism is a nationwide issue, self-reported NAEP data show New Mexico has one of the highest rates in the country—35 percent of fourth graders and 43 percent of eighth graders reported missing significant amounts of school.

New Mexico also has one of the highest child poverty rates in the U.S., which correlates with lower NAEP scores. However, according to Georgetown University's Edunomics Lab, several other high-poverty states—including Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, and West Virginia—saw gains from 2022, likely due to strategic use of federal pandemic relief funds. Louisiana and Mississippi, for example, returned to pre-pandemic fourth grade reading levels after implementing policies that focused on early literacy, teacher training, and interventions for struggling third graders.

Department Operations

In the second quarter, PED processed requests for reimbursement at an average rate of 18 days—five days slower than the first quarter's 13-day average, but still below the 22-day target. School district budget adjustment requests (BARs) increased slightly from 6.8 days in Q1 to 8.2 days in Q2, remaining within the 10-day target. PED attributes the slower processing times to the expiration of several grants, particularly related to federal pandemic (ESSER) aid.

By the end of Q2, PED had awarded 85 percent of special appropriations—a more than 30 percentage point increase from FY24. Early awards indicate the department has streamlined grant processes for most recurring programs, reducing delays in issuing funds from the agency, expediting program implementation, and reducing the need for larger school cash balances. PED has completed five teacher cost index audits and is working on completing 25 program compliance audits to meet its annual goal.

PERFORMANCE REPORT CARD

Public Education Department
Second Quarter, Fiscal Year 2025

Budget: \$24,917.9 FTE: 354	FY23 Actual	FY24 Actual	FY25 Target	FY25 Q1	FY25 Q2	FY25 Q3	Rating
Average days to process reimbursements	38	35	22	13	18		G
Average days to process budget adjustments	7.2	7.8	10	6.8	8.2		G
Data validation of funding formula components	12	30	30	0	5		R
Initiative funding awarded by September 30	95.6%	53.7%	95%	85%	85%		Y
Program Rating							Y

*Measure is classified as explanatory and does not have a target.