




B i t e s i z e

 About 3.5 percent of New Mexico high school students reported in 2015 they had used heroin, compared with the national figure of 2.1 percent, according to the New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey. A little over 14 percent of New Mexico high school students said they had taken prescription drugs without a prescription, compared with 16.8 percent nationally.

 About two-thirds of students in kindergarten through third grade met an Istation benchmark in reading that is an indicator of proficiency at the end of last school year, even though only 25 percent of third graders scored as proficient on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers assessment for FY17. The discrepancy indicates the short-cycle Istation might not be aligned well with content standards or the PARCC test.

 A study of the Youth Development Inc. Early Head Start and Head Start programs, by YDI and Albuquerque Public Schools, shows low-income participants were less likely to be retained, had fewer absences, and had higher scores in early reading but were more likely to have behavior issues as tweens. The study was based on 126,000 kindergarten-through-seventh-grade students in APS between 2008 and 2015 and 8,400 children in the YDI programs between 2007 and 2016.



i n f o r m E D

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Senator Mimi Stewart, Chair/Representative Stephanie Garcia Richard, Vice Chair/Rachel S. Gudgel, Director/September 2017

From the Chairwoman

Bad Math

More than five years ago, when the state first adopted a school grading system, a team of Los Alamos scientists declared the calculation statistically unsound and an administration official infamously said “only a few people in the world” could understand it.

Little has changed – either in the way schools are graded or in the understanding of the formula used to grade them.

The results, however, remain often unfathomable. Schools can jump from an F to a C in a single year or drop just as fast. A school can lose a letter grade if too many students opt out of testing, and a school with above-average students can lose “growth” points if those students don’t improve as quickly their peers in other schools.

Most tellingly, a look at most urban schools indicates schools with low-income students are more likely to get low grades, while schools with more affluent students get better grades. Some educators have argued for years the school grading system fails to account for poverty and the long-term effect it has on learning. They appear to be right.

Innumerable studies show the scars of early poverty heal very slowly, if at all. In New Mexico, we know poverty and proficiency in English are the most reliable predictors of whether a child will succeed or struggle. We’ve even found ways to close that achievement gap but those programs are not available in all schools or to all children who need them.

Parents, students, and all New Mexicans have a right to know how the schools are doing. Indeed, a properly functioning school-assessment system is a key tool to getting supports to the schools that need them. We owe it to the students in those schools to make sure they are getting the best education possible. But first we need a school assessment system that we can trust and that doesn’t turn into a tool for blame.

Senator Mimi Stewart

Teacher Colleges Get New Review Process

The Public Education Department, responsible for ensuring New Mexico’s colleges of education produce effective teachers, has launched new teacher preparation program review procedures and is working on new teacher-college report cards.

The committee heard about both during their August hearing and LESG staff briefs for the [college of education approval process](#) and [report cards](#) are available online.

PED piloted a revised teacher preparation program approval process with New Mexico State University and Central New Mexico Community College in March intended to create “day-one ready” teachers who meet the performance standards that will be part of the report cards.

The revised process, scheduled to be fully implemented during the 2018-2019 school year, is aligned with the department’s teacher evaluation system called NMTech and a national model of core teaching standards and includes quality review criteria and timelines for review and on-site visits.

However, college administrators in the pilot raised concerns about ambiguous standards, the lack of

guidelines on what data should be collected, a focus on the quality of the candidates and not their content knowledge, limited classroom observations, unclear expectations on who should be part of the process, feedback based more on anecdotes than evidence, and the lack of a process for the pilot colleges to provide feedback.

The revised review process, initiated in 2014 and focused at first on an “inspectorate” model driven by the needs and observations of the people who hire teachers, is based on a year-long study by Columbia University’s Center for Public Research and Leadership that included a review of research and programs from across the country and interviews with local education leaders and teachers.

New Mexico since 2008 has been required under federal law to report on the effectiveness of its colleges of education. New federal rules, based on several years of negotiations with education groups, were released in 2016 and would have required states to rate their programs and report on graduate placement and retention and the performance of the students they teach, among

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State Adopts Tougher English Standard

A change in the grading of the standard test for English language proficiency led to a big drop in the number of English-learning students scoring as proficient, but test designers say the new grading system is better aligned with success on the tests for academic subjects, LESC staff reports.

While 14 percent of English learners scored as proficient on the ACCESS test in FY16, the Public Education Department reports most school districts and charter schools saw that figure drop to 1 percent in FY17, an LESC brief says.

The committee is scheduled to hear about changes in the test and the impact on the state during a hearing at 9 a.m. September 29 at the Artesia Public Schools administrative building.

WIDA, the nonprofit that designs ACCESS and other tests and curricula for English learners, changed the scoring system to make it tougher to earn

a 4.6 to 6, the score WIDA considers a good sign the student is proficient and ready for mainstream education.

Students scoring within this range are likely to be proficient on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, or PARCC, English and math standardized tests as well, WIDA reported.

While the scores indicating proficiency did not change, achieving the scores became more difficult, with WIDA indicating students who would have scored a 5 on the old test should earn a 4 on the new test.

Each of the 37 states using the test set their own cut score, with New Mexico setting the score on the old test at 5 because it was aligned with proficiency on the no-longer-in-use New Mexico Standards-Based Assessment.

However, just 9 percent of those earning a 5 on the old test in FY16 met

proficiency on the PARCC assessments, the Public Education Department says.

It says 42 percent of English learners scoring a 5 on the new test scored as proficient on PARCC.

With fewer English learner students scoring as proficient on the new test, more students will remain identified as English learners, LESC staff notes, raising concerns about the impact on state spending and the ability of the state to meet goals set in the state's plan under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act.

English language proficiency is used, along with income and mobility, to determine the number of students at risk of failing in a school district. Schools get extra funds to meet the higher cost of educating at-risk students. The Legislative Finance Committee estimates the lower number of English learners meeting proficiency will increase the count of at-risk students, shifting about \$2.6 million of formula funding.

In the state plan created as a requirement of the new federal education law, New Mexico set a goal that assumes English learners will acquire English proficiency within five years of being identified.

The consequences of a state failing to miss a goal in its state plan are unclear.

Teacher Prep Programs Under Review

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other results. Those rules would have tied student success to certain federal grants but Congress and the new president rescinded the new rules in March.

The New Mexico Public Education Department has been working on a comprehensive report card to evaluate teacher preparation programs since 2014.

The department under state law is required to report annually on teacher preparation programs through the

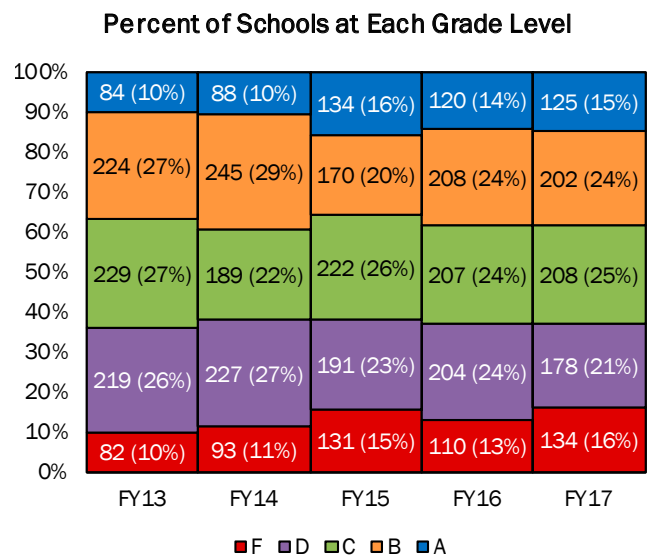
educator accountability reporting system. That report is supposed to include data on student achievement, teacher and administrator retention, teacher qualifications and the number of teachers trained in science, technology, and math.

Little Change in Share of Schools at Top, Bottom

More schools received Fs for the 2016-2017 school year than ever before, but when combined with the schools that received Ds, the percentage of schools at the bottom - 37 percent - was the same as the previous year.

Similarly, the share of schools with top grades also was unchanged, with a slight drop in the percentage of A schools, even though five more schools received A grades, but no change in the share of B schools.

A and B grades made up 39 percent of all grades.



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(505) 986-4591 www.nmlegis.gov/lesc

Marit Rogne, Staff Editor | Helen Gaussoin, Editor