



## Teach Plus New Mexico: 2023-2024 Policy Priorities

### About Teach Plus New Mexico

Teach Plus launched a Policy Fellowship for highly effective teachers in New Mexico in 2016. Since then, we have worked with some of New Mexico's best educators. Throughout the program, we develop these teachers' skills in policy, advocacy, research, and communications to empower them to advocate for changes for New Mexico students. The Fellows focus on improving systems, policies, and practices to increase access to effective educators, advance educational outcomes for all our students, and uplift the education profession. Each Fellow is chosen based on their strong commitment to the classroom and to equity, their ability to articulate the needs of their students, and their pursuit of excellence and innovation in their teaching.

### About 2023-24 Teach Plus New Mexico Policy Fellows

The 2023-24 cohort is composed of 15 Teach Plus Policy Fellowship alumni. These teacher leaders completed the training with the Teach Plus program, preparing them to delve deeper into issues of importance to New Mexico's students and communities, including high quality data and assessments, teacher leadership, and early literacy. **These legislative priorities are detailed throughout this packet.**



2023-2024 Alumni Policy Fellowship

## High Quality Data and Assessments

**Why We Need It:** When implemented deliberately and effectively, high-quality assessments and accessible data systems help monitor student progress toward goals and assist in collaborative decision-making when it comes to student learning. Since 2022, New Mexico students have participated in a variety of assessments, which then require parents to wade through multiple, different data reports to understand their child's growth and progress. The constant change has sown confusion, making it difficult to maintain a measurable student learning tool, understand student learning, and build partnerships with both students and families.

**What the Evidence Shows:** The adoption of high-quality assessment and data systems has been a key component in achievement gains in school systems across the country. For example, in the time that Massachusetts adopted the [Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System](#) (MCAS), the percentage of Massachusetts tenth graders proficient in mathematics rose from 24 percent in 1998 to 78 percent in 2018. The percentage proficient in English language arts rose from 38 percent to 91 percent.

**Where We Are:** In an effort to develop a new quality data tool, NM Vistas was refreshed last spring and will continue to house current accountability data, including how students perform on graduation rates and state assessments. Those tests were written several years ago by New Mexicans for New Mexico students.

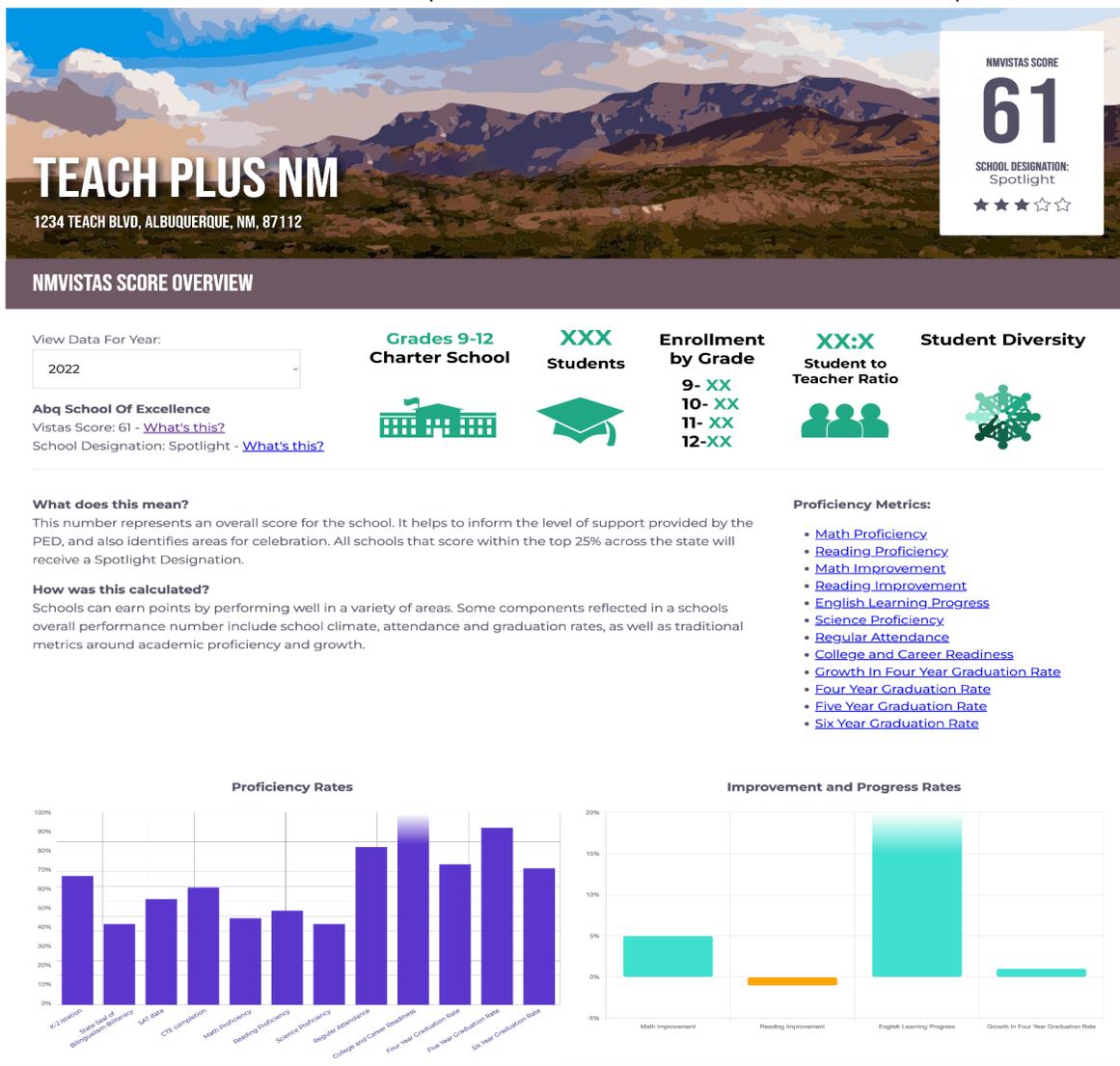
**Teach Plus Policy Fellows Recommend:** Update NM Vistas frequently and ensure it is easy to use by everyone in the community. More specifically, clarify school designations and what supports are provided by the state. There are five areas for targeted improvement that are focused on assessment, data, and continuous improvement:

- Build a statewide framework for education in New Mexico
  - Shared, system-wide accountability
  - Coordinated statewide goals
  - Long-term vision
  - User friendly terminology and graphics
- Create an independent data warehousing and analysis agency
- Measure and report student proficiency and growth at all school levels, on all state required assessments, such as:
  - K-2 I-Station Math and Reading
  - 3-8 NM-MSSA
  - 10-11-SAT, PSAT
  - 5th, 8th, 11th- NM-ASR
  - CTE Certificates

- ACCESS for ELL's
- DLM- Alternate Assessment for Special Education

“High quality instruction, assessment, materials, and professional development are the foundational pieces that create a successful education for a student. If one of those tenets is missing, there will be gaps for students. Our students, families, and educators deserve well-defined systems that will provide consistency in data. There is an opportunity for improving consistent systems that are elastic and can withstand change.” —Teach Plus alumna

Below is an example of how the addition of graphics can support understanding and should include additional data points, not limited to those in the example.



## Teacher Leadership

**Why We Need It:** Teachers are the single most important school-based factor influencing student achievement and educator vacancies negatively impact all our students and especially those from low-income families and students of color. Teachers' likelihood of retention is greater when they can take on formal leadership roles in which they can advocate on behalf of students and their fellow educators. This is especially true when there are also opportunities to partner with school, district, and charter officials to address student and teacher needs. Structured teacher leadership programs are a critical solution to the issue of teacher retention and an important way to help every student succeed by ensuring high-quality teachers stay in the classroom.

**What the Evidence Shows:** Teacher leadership programs positively contribute to student achievement. Public Impact's Opportunity Culture showed that teachers joining teams led by multi-classroom leaders moved their students from the fiftieth percentile to the 75th-85th percentile in math growth, and to the 66th to 72nd percentile in reading growth.

Micah Ann Wixom's report, [Mitigating Teacher Shortages: Teacher Leadership](#), highlights that teacher leaders report greater job satisfaction, and that teacher leadership positively influences factors that shape teacher retention.

**Where We Are:** New Mexico is developing systems and engaging stakeholders around the importance of effective teachers and leaders. The New Mexico Public Education Department is increasing leadership possibilities, including principal residencies. The Legislative Education Study Committee is working with a State Equalization Guarantee (SEG) Review Working Group that includes a variety of stakeholders and issues, including pay differentials for educators.

**Teach Plus Policy Fellows Recommend:** Educators should not need to leave the classroom, where they are boosting student outcomes, to be teacher leaders. Teach Plus proposes a pay differential and homegrown leadership pilot programs. To support the development and implementation of high-quality teacher leadership programs, we recommend the following:

- Create a pay differential that is included in the SEG funding formula to compensate for targeted teacher roles and certifications that are beyond the normal duties of a classroom teacher.
- Develop a funding source that can be utilized as a grant option for schools and districts to develop their own high-quality teacher leadership programs that can be studied for quality and student outcomes.
- Support an initiative to establish a state-level committee whose primary focus is to reevaluate how Level 3 teachers are engaged as teacher leaders and

explore the option for the development of Level 4 license as a tool for retention of highly effective teachers.

*“A clear framework for teacher leadership that both expands pathways for compensation and keeps effective educators in the classroom is an opportunity for New Mexico to prioritize student learning and success.” —Teach Plus alumna*

## Teacher Leadership Grant Proposal:

***In 2022, Teach Plus teachers led the charge on the first teacher leadership bill to be introduced in Congress: the Teachers LEAD (Leading , Educating, Advocating and Designing) Act. 2021 New Mexico Teacher of the Year Alisa Cooper de Uribe was instrumental in drafting and garnering support for the LEAD Act. The bill garnered support from over 40 organizations nationwide - New Mexico Teach Plus teachers propose creating a New Mexico version of the Teachers LEAD Act.***

### The Problem:

The K-12 education system is experiencing an ongoing teacher recruitment, retention, and shortage crisis. Teachers are the single most important school-based factor influencing student achievement, but the high level of teacher turnover is negatively impacting our nation's students.

Teachers' likelihood of retention is greater where opportunities exist for teachers to invest in their schools by taking on formal leadership roles where they can advocate on behalf of students and their peers. This is especially true when there are also opportunities to partner with school and district officials to address student and teacher needs. *Structured teacher leadership programs are a critical solution to the teacher retention and shortage crisis, and an important way to help every student succeed by ensuring high-quality teachers stay in the classroom.*

### By The Numbers:

- 62% of Black teachers, 59% of Hispanic teachers, and 55% of all teachers said they were more likely to retire early or leave the profession, according to a [National Education Association Poll](#) in January 2022. This is a 37% increase from August 2021.
- 51% of teachers want career advancement opportunities such as those provided by *teacher leadership*, according to the most recent [MetLife Survey of the American Teacher](#).
- Teacher leadership programs positively contribute to student achievement. An [evaluation](#) of Public Impact's Opportunity Culture showed that teachers joining teams led by multi-classroom leaders moved their students from the 50th percentile to the 75th to 85th percentile in math growth, and to the 66th to 72nd percentile in reading growth.

**Teach Plus Policy Fellows Recommend** creating a grant program that allows for development of small teacher leadership pilots tailored to local needs. The grant

program will:

- Create a framework for a teacher leadership model that can be used across the state of New Mexico;
- Position classroom teachers as teacher leaders who will participate in shared decision-making with school and district officials and impact student success;
- Provide opportunities for teacher leaders to take on instructional leadership and mentorship skills and program development;
- Encourage collaborative, evidence-based, sustained professional peer-to-peer learning and;
- Provide teacher leaders with time and tangible compensation for their added responsibilities.

### **Funding Request:**

To adequately support effective teacher leadership programs, the New Mexico legislature should allocate \$300,000 for 3-5 programs in districts/schools with a potential pilot program.

## **Sample Bill Language to Establish a Grant Program**

### **Section 1: Teacher Leadership Pilot Grant**

#### **Section 2: Findings**

Cites research and studies describing the ongoing teacher recruitment, retention, and shortage crisis in the United States, and its negative impact on students, the profession, and the country's education system. Current educator shortages, low salaries, a lack of professional development opportunities, and low teacher input into school policies are leading to burnout and causing teachers to retire or leave their jobs. These phenomena are especially true for teachers of color, who are already underrepresented in the profession.

*Studies also show that there is a positive link between professional leadership opportunities and the retention of classroom teachers. Yet, currently, structured leadership programs for classroom teachers are uncommon even though they have great potential to increase teacher retention and combat the nationwide teacher shortage.*

#### **Section 3: Teacher Leadership Grant Program**

Establishes a competitive grant program through the Department of Education for eligible entities, which include: local education agencies (LEAs), educational service agencies (ESAs), or partnerships between LEAs and ESAs and non-profits with

expertise in teacher leadership, State educational agencies, a public or private non-profit college or university, or a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), Tribal College or University (TCU) or Minority-Serving Institution (MSI) to carry out teacher leadership programs. These entities may apply for funding by submitting a program proposal that outlines how their program will achieve at least one of the following objectives:

- Create structures and time for collaborative decision-making between teachers and school leaders;
- Ensure teacher participation in strategic planning, implement practices to support cognitive and social-emotional learning, and create inclusive learning environments; or
- Provide teacher leaders training and support to improve their skills as instructional leaders, coaches, mentors, or facilitators of professional learning.

For whichever of these goals a grantee selects, they must demonstrate how they will ensure that all eligible teachers (with at least three years of teaching experience) are able to apply to be teacher leaders.

- Selection criteria for teacher leaders may include their commitment to balance leadership activities with classroom teaching,
- focus on improving the goals of their school,
- implement data-based improvements for teachers and students, and facilitate professional learning with their peers, including how to better support English learners, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, historically underrepresented, or linguistically, racially, and culturally diverse students.
- Teacher leaders selected for the program must be compensated for their added responsibilities, either through monetary compensation or through paid time off (when requested).
- Leadership programs should be developed and implemented in consultation with teachers.

The Secretary shall give priority to applications from the following eligible entities:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● High-need LEAs or ESAs</li> <li>● Schools that receive Impact Aid Basic Support Payments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Eligible entities that demonstrate commitment to recruiting and retaining teachers from underrepresented populations</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indian Tribes, Tribal educational agencies, Tribal educational organizations or Native Hawaiian organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligible entities with above-average teacher turnover</li> <li>• Eligible entities that partner with groups or institutions of higher education that have successful track records in supporting teacher leadership or advancing teacher diversity</li> </ul>
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Data reporting is required annually for each participating eligible entity, which will include an evaluation of the grant program's impact on teacher retention rates and employment status disaggregated by race, gender and ethnicity. A summary of all eligible entities' reports will be made to the Secretary of Education, transmitted to Congress within three years of the grant program's enactment, and made publicly available on the Department's website.

## Early Literacy

**Why We Need It:** New Mexico reading proficiency rates have remained alarmingly low for many years. While funding, access, and targeted initiatives have increased, there is still an opportunity to align systems, resources, and expectations to ensure multiple drivers for students' success are in place for students across the state. Thanks to research and success from other states, like Mississippi, we have a better understanding of best practices to ensure students are able to read at grade level, giving them a higher chance of being successful in school and their future careers.

**What the Evidence Shows:** According to the [Regional Educational Laboratory Program \(REL\)](#), reading proficiency matters for academic achievement and post-secondary success. The REL report points out that one in six children who are not reading proficiently in third grade do not graduate from high school on time, a rate four times greater than that for proficient readers.

**Where We Are:** The New Mexico Statewide Literacy Framework from summer 2020 outlines specific goals and critical components related to leadership, instruction and interventions, assessment, professional learning, and family engagement. Aligned with these efforts, professional learning on literacy and instruction on research-based Science of Reading for teachers have become priorities in New Mexico. About \$21.5 million was earmarked for literacy in the 2023-2024 school year. Currently, about 6,500 educators are enrolled in LETRS professional development and nearly 1,300 educators have already completed the training.

**Teach Plus Policy Fellows Recommend:** While New Mexico has taken the initiative to support early literacy for our youngest learners, there is a lack of consistency among best practices, which leaves many students without access to high-quality structured literacy instruction. In order to increase access to quality systems and effective educators, we recommend the following:

- Require that teacher candidates receive training in Science of Reading instruction during their educator preparation programs, and either require a passing score on the Science of Reading exam to demonstrate beginning teacher readiness for early literacy instruction or update the portfolio system to include a section on structured literacy.
- Require all districts to adopt a state-approved structured literacy curriculum that is aligned with the Science of Reading. This should be implemented within the next five years across all districts and schools.
- Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, require general education second grade students to demonstrate proficiency in reading skills for advancement to

third grade. Students should be provided the following options to demonstrate proficient reading skills for promotion:

- (1) Score above the lowest achievement level on the grade 2 statewide English language arts assessment.
- (2) Earn an acceptable score on an alternative standardized reading assessment as determined and approved by the New Mexico Public Education Department, including a Spanish reading assessment for students whose first language is Spanish.
- (3) Demonstrate mastery of all grade 2 state reading standards as evidenced through a test-based student portfolio option. Regulation must be established to set criteria for the test-based student portfolio option and to define “mastery” of all grade 2 state reading standards. Screeners shall not be used for promotion purposes.

Teach Plus submitted an IPRA request related to literacy plans and curriculum. We learned the following:

At the time of the IPRA request, November 29, 2023:

- Five districts had not submitted their literacy plans to the NMPED
- Eight districts submitted their plans, but have been requested to resubmit by the NMPED
- Three charter schools with elementary grade levels had not submitted their literacy plans to NMPED
- One charter school with elementary grade levels was requested to resubmit by the NMPED

In our request to:

“List of Reading/Language Arts Curriculum adopted by districts and/or charter schools and whether or not the curriculum is aligned with Science of Reading. (The Science of Reading prescribes instruction for concepts such as word recognition, decoding, phonological awareness, and sight word recognition for younger students).”

NMPED responded:

“PED does not have a list that fits exactly what the requestor is asking for in the IPRA. However, attached is a list of school districts and the English Language Arts instructional materials they have purchased and if they are adopted by PED as core instructional material. The data is from SY19/20 through SY21/22. If they are listed as core they are considered comprehensive, full course of study instructional materials that were reviewed by NM teachers for research-based determination, alignment with state standards and criteria for determining high-quality. The reviews included criteria for components of structured literacy. The IPRA requestor can cross reference the provided list with our [Adopted Multiple List-All Subjects](#) to determine if the review teams

recognized the instructional materials for their components of structured literacy. This information would be found on the 2021 K-8 ELA, SLA, ELD, WL tab and look in column E Structured Literacy Recognition for core instructional materials only. Per statute, we do not review supplementary instructional materials."

## Training and Transparency for School Boards

**Why We Need It:** Educational decisions that impact students are made at a variety of levels, including state, district, and school. Among these, school boards stand out as one of the most important decision-making bodies. As Teach Plus and Teach Plus teacher leaders continue to advocate for quality systems and support to improve student learning and enhance the teaching profession, we believe it is imperative that we focus on local school boards, which are engaged in critical activities such as employment and evaluation of a superintendent of schools for the district; creation and adoption of district policy; and review and approval of a school district budget. We believe that if school board members are thoughtfully trained and supported to be effective in their roles, then the boards will be more effective and our schools and students will thrive.

**What the Evidence Shows:** A study from the Michigan Association of School Boards found that 74% of participants believed that formal professional development instruction for board members was either "Essential" or, at least, "Very Important." In *Growing evidence of the value of School Board Training*, the researchers found that school board training resulted in an increased focus on student achievement; that board members were motivated to take part in such training by virtue of the culture of the district and the accessibility of the training; and that board members who receive specific training in governance are likely to exhibit behaviors reflecting good governance. According to *Value of School Board Training*, "Results indicated a statistically significant relationship between district (n=203) performance scores/grades and number of training governance team members attended during the 2017-18 school year."

**Where We Are:** In prior years, school board member training was reported in school district "report cards." This information has not been reported in the past couple of years. According to the [School Accountability: The Role of Governance in School Improvement](#), the September 2023 LESC brief, the 2022-2023 New Mexico School Board Association (NMSBA) report lists 337 members as having completed training requirements, while 100 have not. Of those 100, 48 attended no training. Additionally, 13 of 89 school districts reported three or more of their school board members not having met requirements. This information is not currently posted in a tool that is easily accessible for the public.

**Teach Plus Policy Fellows Recommend:** As a first step in an effort to support learning and quality of local school board members, we must ensure there is a system focused on

transparency and accountability for training requirements of school board members. Stakeholders have the right to know if their elected officials are meeting requirements for mandatory training and are attending regular board meetings. There is an opportunity to report this information statewide:

- Report the number of regular school board meetings each school board member has attended and missed on the NMvistas.org website under the “district” home page.
- Report the number of training hours each school board member has attended and whether or not they have met the mandatory annual training hours.
- Update this information on an annual basis, utilizing the NMSBA annual training report and requiring each district to submit attendance to the NMPED.

**Closing:** We believe that by improving systems, empowering educators, and staying focused on student outcomes, students across our state will not be limited by circumstances, but empowered by opportunity.