



520 Native American Language & Culture (NALC) Certification

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Committee*

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Purpose of the Work

- Expand Native language programming throughout schools and communities to broaden student access and participation.
- Increase the number of 520-certified Native American language and culture teachers with targeted recruitment efforts.
- Increase the number of students who graduate with the bilingualism/biliteracy state seal.



Overview of 520 NALC Certification

What is a 520 NALC Certification?

- State-issued 520 certification allows Native language and culture experts to teach in New Mexico public and charter schools.
- Confirms proficiency in a tribe's language and culture; no college degree required.
- Certified individuals may serve as instructors and must be paid at least the Level I teacher minimum if full-time.

Who qualifies to receive a 520 NALC certificate?	Who determines when a 520 NALC certification can be granted?	Who issues the 520 NALC certificate?
Individuals recognized by their tribe as proficient in that tribe's language and culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determination is made through a formal agreement between the tribe and the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED).• The tribe identifies qualified individuals.• PED honors the tribe's determination under the agreement.	Certification is issued and renewed jointly by the tribe and PED following established procedures.

520 NALC Certificates Referenced in Statute

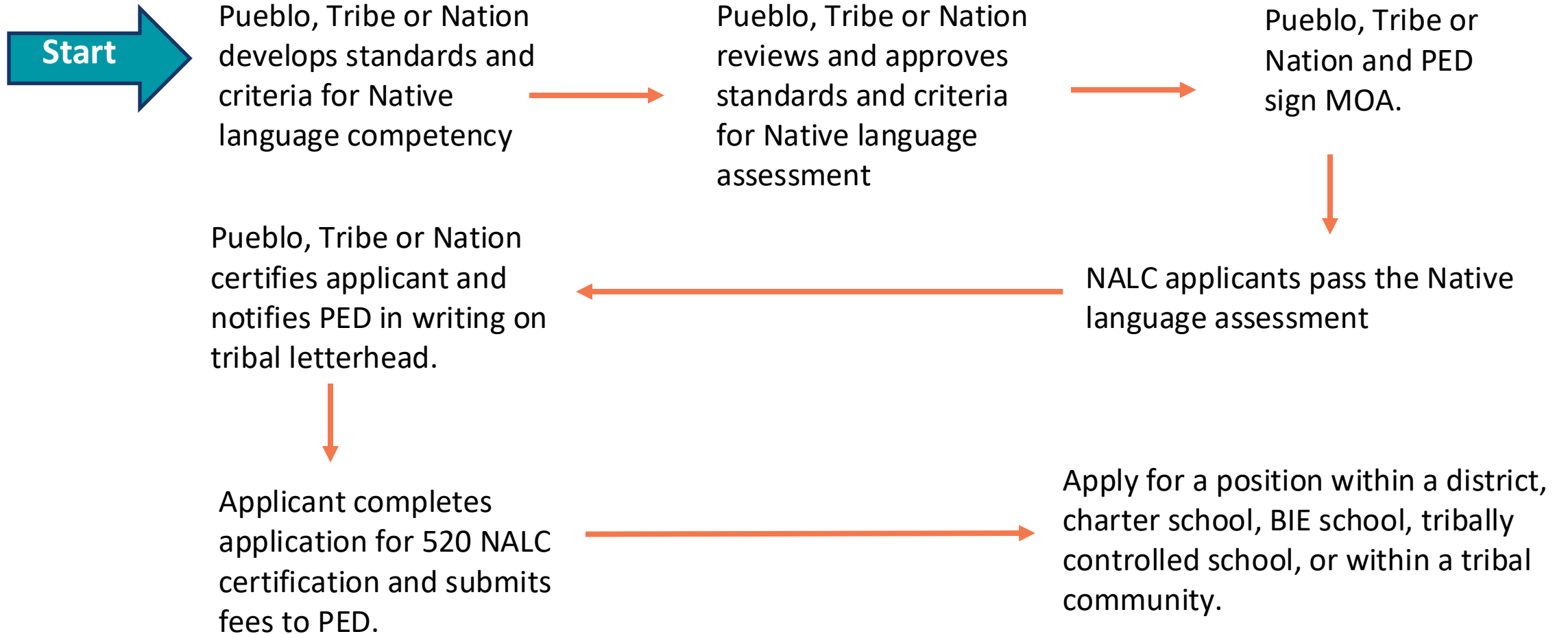
2003

Addition to Public School Code, Section 44, to include, 22-10A-13 Native American Language and Culture Certificates

2022

Amended to include language that identifies the minimum annual salary for 520 NALC certificate holders to be equal to the minimum annual salary for a level one licensed teacher

520 NALC Certification Process



Status of 520 NALC Certifications

Total 520 NALC Certificate Holders in NM
234*

* PED Licensure Bureau, Data retrieved July 2025

Native Languages	Number of 520 NALC Certificate Holders	Districts or Charter Schools Employing 520 NALC Holders in SY 24/25**
Navajo (Dine)	92	Albuquerque, Aztec, Bloomfield, Central Consolidated, Cuba, Farmington, Gallup, Grants, Native American Community Academy (NACA), Magdalena, Jemez Mountain, Dream Dine, Hozho Academy, Six Directions
Keres	18	Bernalillo, Grants
Tewa	3	Pojoaque, Espanola
Tiwa	4	Los Lunas, Penasco, Taos, NACA
Towa	2	Walatowa Charter, San Diego Riverside
Jicarilla Apache	5	Dulce
Mescalero Apache	2	Ruidoso, Tularosa
Zuni	24	Zuni, Albuquerque, NACA, Six Directions, Hozho Academy
Lakota	1	NACA
Total	151	26 Districts & Charter Schools

** SY 24/25 80-Day Snapshot; Count includes individuals teaching in public school districts or charter schools during the 2024–2025 school year. Does not include 520-certified instructors teaching in tribal communities, BIE schools, or Tribally Controlled Schools.

Status of Memorandums of Agreement Filed with PED

Pueblo, Tribe or Nation	Date Signed	Pueblo, Tribe or Nation	Date Signed
Jicarilla Apache	9/8/2003	Pueblo of Cochiti	10/13/2006
Pueblo of Zuni	8/13/2004	Pueblo of Zia	11/13/2006
Navajo Nation	10/27/2004	Pueblo of Isleta	3/15/2007
Pueblo of Santa Ana	12/14/2004	Pueblo of Santa Clara	1/15/2008
Pueblo of Acoma	9/12/2005	Pueblo of San Felipe	2/18/2008
Pueblo of Laguna	11/9/2005	Pueblo of Picuris	6/8/2009
Pueblo of Santo Domingo	12/21/2005	Pueblo of Jemez	7/15/2009
Ohkay Owingeh	1/17/2006	Pueblo of Taos	2/28/2011
Mescalero Apache	2/2/2006	Pueblo of Sandia	(MOA in Review)

Formalizing the 520 NALC Certification Process

- Identify best practices developed by tribes that can serve as models for others.
- Recognize varying stages of 520 NALC certification within tribes to better target and intensify PED support.
- Integrate a structured pathway to strengthen tribal capacity and self-determined growth.



Next Steps

- Expand opportunities for success in the classroom after attaining a 520 NALC certificate.
- Work with districts and charter schools to recruit and hire 520 NALC certificate holders.



For More Information

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