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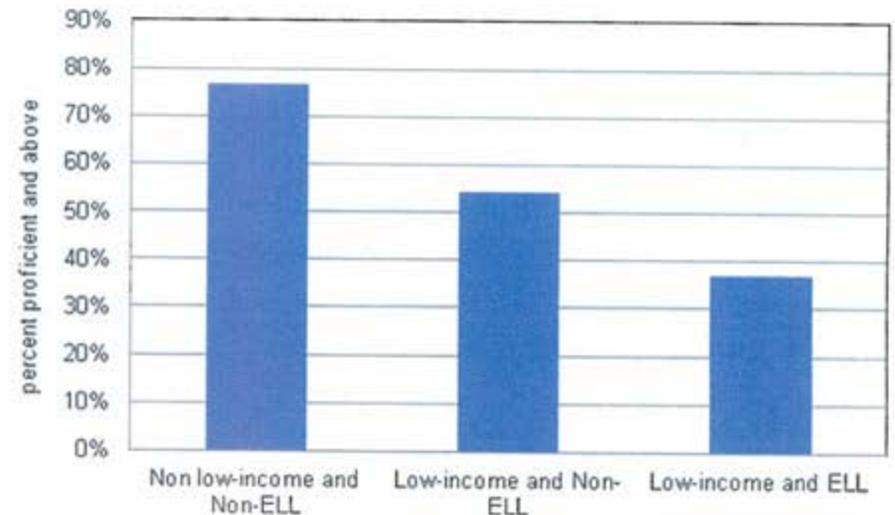
# Performance and Improvement Trends: A Case Study of Elementary Schools in New Mexico

Presented to  
The Legislative Education Study Committee  
November 19, 2014

# New Mexico Students..

- 80 percent from low-income families behind on first day of school.
- Low-income and English Language Learners (ELL) lag behind more affluent, non-ELL peers.
- Low-income and English Language Learners (ELL) lag behind more affluent, non-ELL peers.
- About half of elementary students read at grade level and less than half perform at grade level in math.

Third Grade Reading Achievement Gap, FY14



Source: LFC Analysis

# Executive Summary

- New Mexico has high rates of students at-risk of academic failure.
- Previous LFC evaluations and national research show achievement gap largely function of poverty and language.
- Evaluation focused on elementary school performance.
- High-performing elementary schools:
  - Move a population of low-income students to proficiency on state assessments
  - Effectively overcome impact of poverty.
  - Use research-based practices.

# Objective and Methodology

## Objectives:

- Evaluation assessed how school leadership; use of staff; funding; and programming impacted student achievement.

## Methodology:

- Multi-site case study
- Mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative)
- State and district data and analysis of PED data sets
- Multiple sources of additional information including:
  - National research and evaluations
  - Previous LFC evaluations
  - Statewide LFC survey (43 percent of elementary school principals responded)
  - Literature review

# Elementary Schools Selection

- Fifteen schools in eight school districts: Albuquerque Public Schools; Central Consolidated Schools; Española Public Schools; Gadsden Independent Schools; Gallup-McKinley County Schools; Las Cruces Public Schools; Ruidoso Municipal Schools; and Santa Fe Public Schools.
- Performance model to examine difference between predicted and actual performance.

Other criteria included:

- Over 60 percent at-risk population
- Over 50 percent low-income students, as measured by FRL percentages
- High ELL population





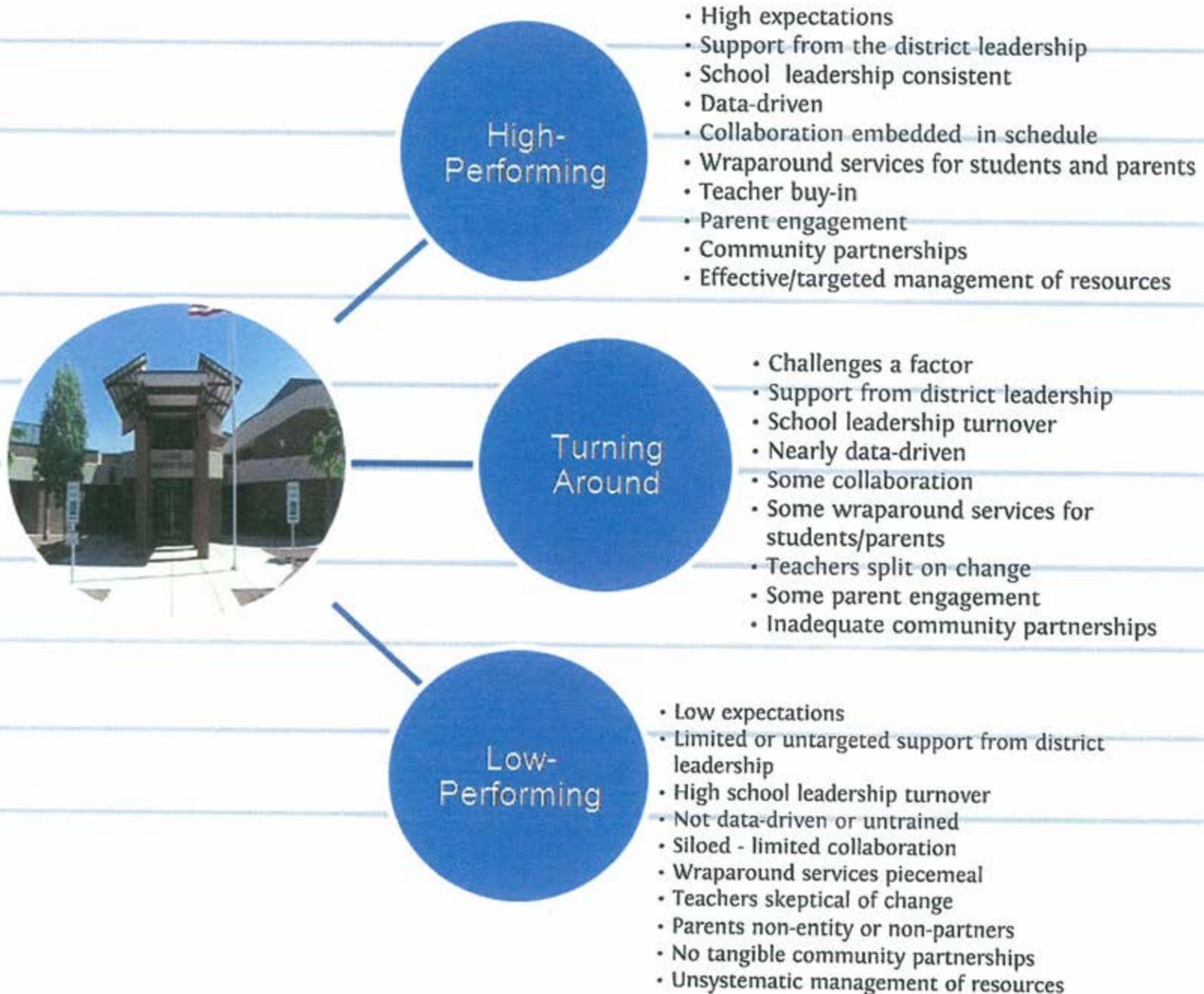
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## **HIGH-PERFORMING SCHOOLS TARGET FUNDING AND RESOURCES AND USE BEST PRACTICES TO EFFECTIVELY MAXIMIZE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

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- Despite similar at-risk student demographics high- and low-performing elementary schools vary dramatically in student performance, best practices, and climate and culture.
  - Schools implementing best practices demonstrate better results.
  - High-performing schools promote urgency around continual use of assessments and data which have proven to pay off in student growth.
  - High-performing schools provide wraparound services for parents and students to reduce negative effects of high-poverty.
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# Observed Practices at Elementary Schools



# Eight Characteristics of High-Performing Schools

High  
Expectations  
and  
Standards

High Levels  
of  
Collaboration  
and  
Communication

Strategic  
Assignment  
of  
Principal  
and  
Staff

Focused  
Professional  
Development

Regular  
and  
Targeted  
Parent  
and  
Community  
Involvement

Caring  
Staff  
Dedicated  
to  
Diversity  
and  
Equity

Curriculum,  
Instruction,  
and  
Assessment  
Aligned  
with  
Core  
Standards

Data-Driven  
Focus  
and  
Frequent  
Monitoring  
of  
Student  
Achievement

# Funding and Resources

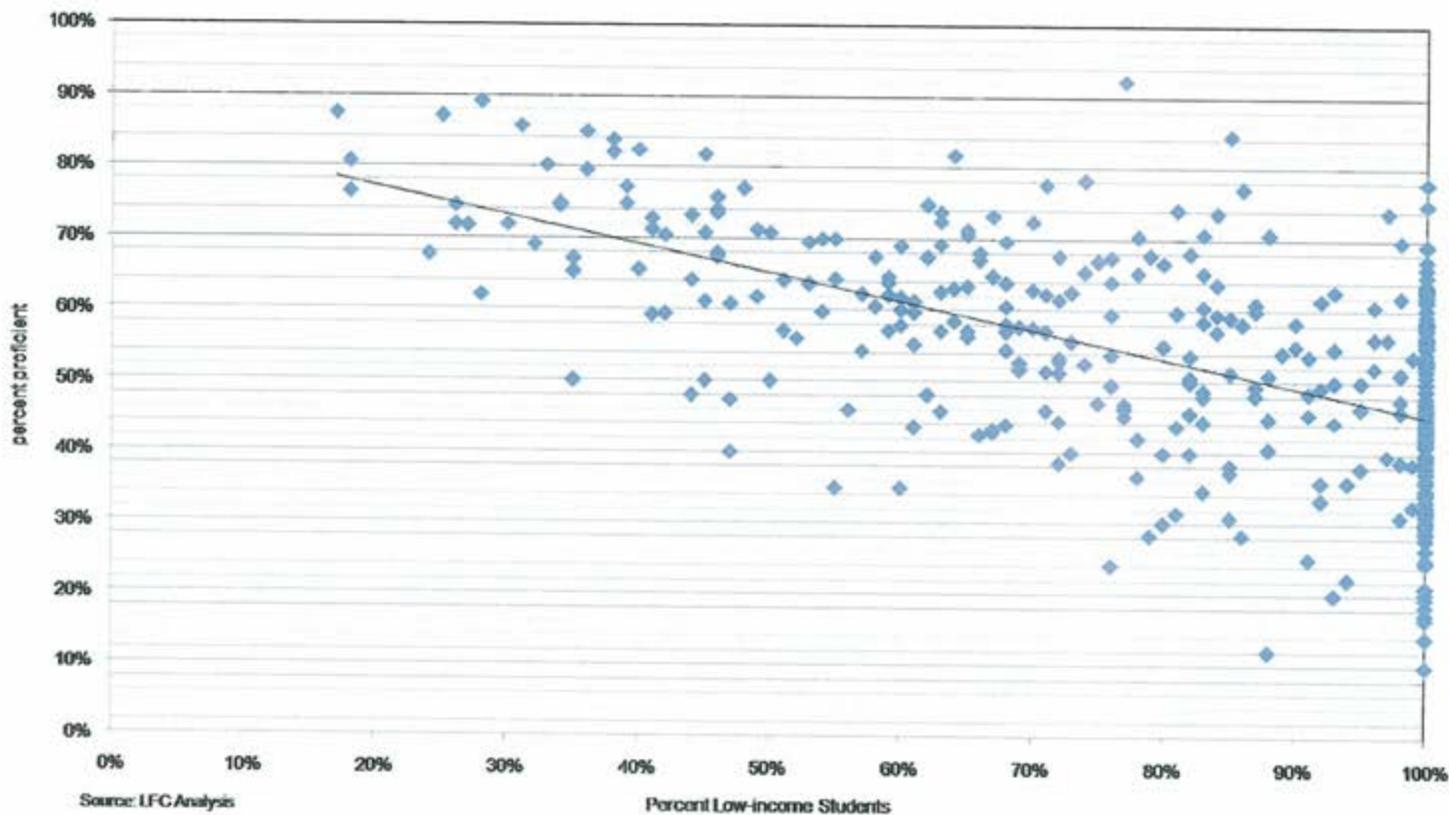
- School districts often must rely on federal funding to improve student performance.
- High-performing schools allocated larger percent of funds to direct instruction and professional development.
- High-performing schools effectively use state grants such as K-3 Plus and Pre-kindergarten.
- Schools in this study with high at-risk index received same per-pupil funding allocation as other school districts with lower at-risk index and lower-poverty rate.

**MANY SCHOOLS FACE CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH STUDENT POVERTY BUT CAN STILL ATTAIN HIGH LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT WITH MODEST IMPROVEMENTS IN PERFORMANCE**

- Research shows impacts of student poverty and school challenges on student performance.
- Previous LFC evaluations noted student performance highly influenced by economic and language status and student attendance.
- Nationally and statewide, research suggests mobility more prevalent among low-income students and negatively affects student and school performance.

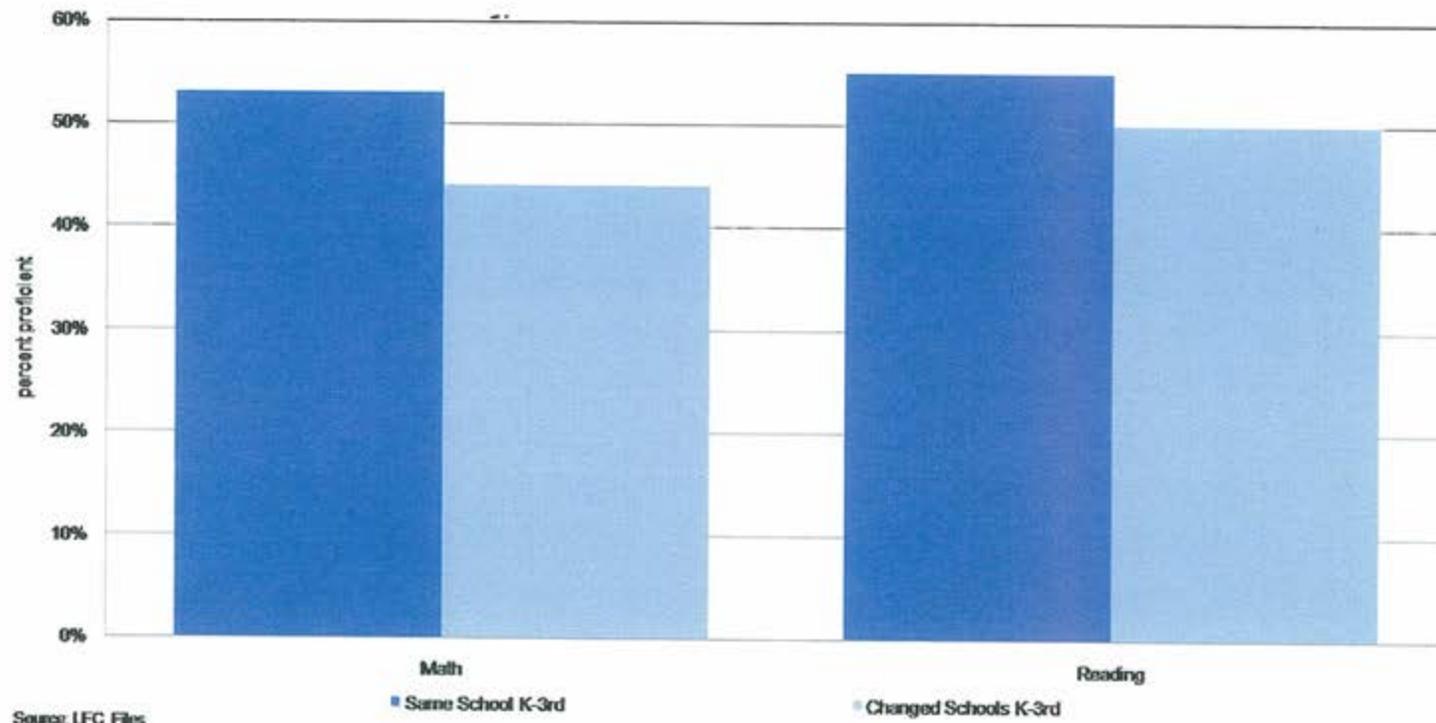
# Schools with larger populations of low-income students had fewer students proficient in reading in FY13.

Third Grade Reading Proficiency by School Poverty Level, FY13



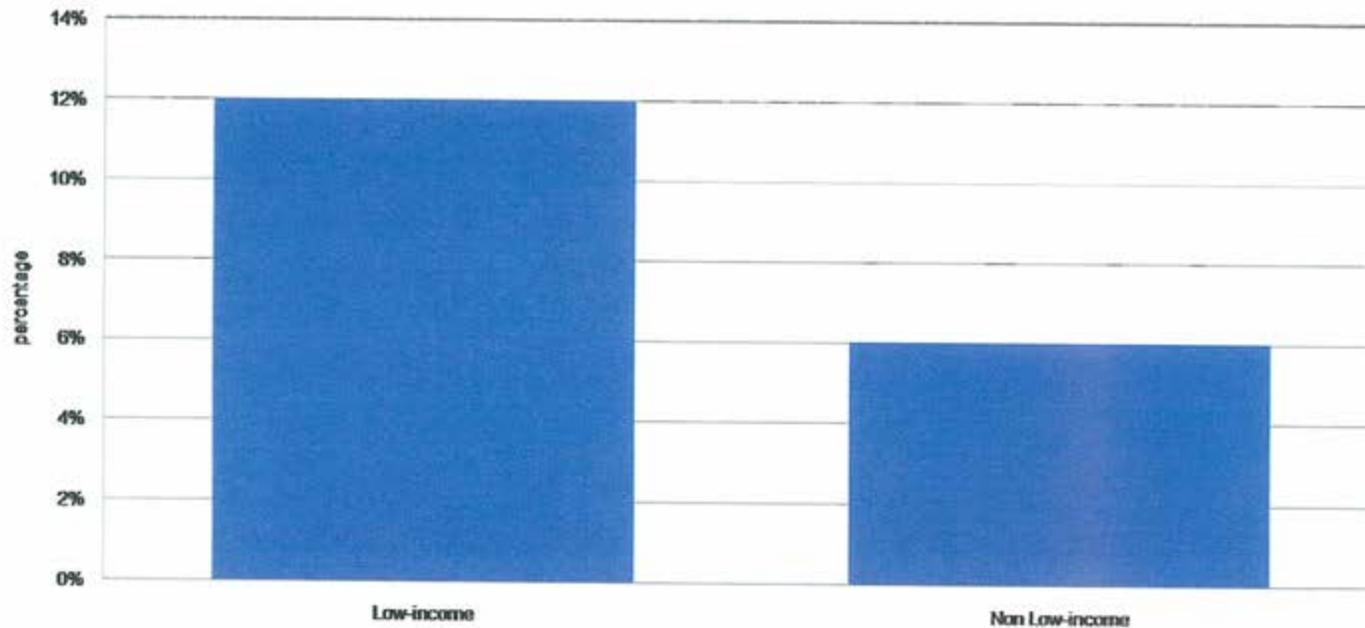
New Mexico students remaining in same school from kindergarten through third grade more likely proficient in SBA reading and math, even after controlling for effects of poverty.

Third Grade Proficiency by Student Mobility, FY13



Improving attendance by roughly four school days corresponds to one-point increase on SBA reading scaled score.

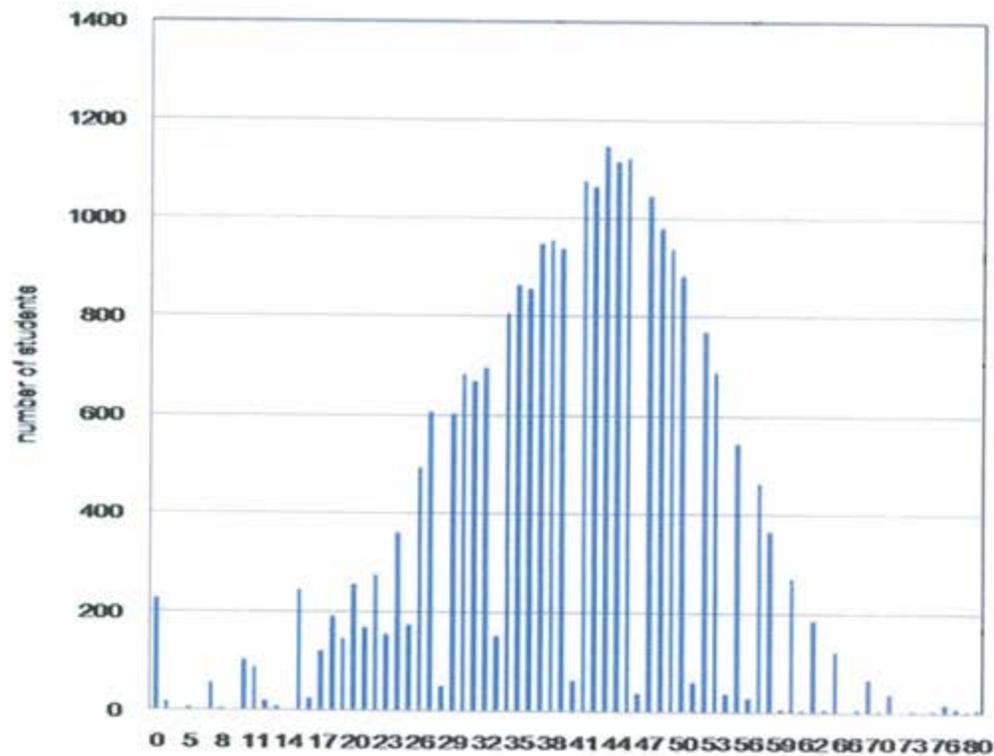
Elementary Students Statewide Absent 10 or More Days, FY14



Source: LFC Files

# Students remain clustered on cusp of proficiency on SBA reading.

Frequency of Third Grade Reading SBA Scaled Scores, FY14



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## **EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND TEACHERS ARE KEY FACTORS IN CREATING A FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVED STUDENT PERFORMANCE AT HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS**

- Research indicates combination of effective teachers, principals, and district leadership implementing best practices can result in high-performing, high-poverty schools.
- Effective teachers can have positive impact and narrow achievement gap.
- Effective principals account for retention of highly qualified teachers and critical to vision and implementation of schoolwide reform policies.



# Teachers

Low-performing schools in study:

- Higher levels of beginning teachers.
- Fewer teachers with students achieving academic growth.
- Almost double percentage of level one teachers than high-performing schools.
- Teachers with lower NMTA basic skills test scores.

# Teacher Hiring and Retention

- Teacher and principal recruitment, retention, and preparation programs continue to be a challenge in New Mexico.
- Most principals in evaluated schools and survey concurred teacher preparation programs not doing enough to train new teachers in classroom management skills and data analysis.
- State and school district policies generally do not support placement or hiring of effective teachers at high-poverty schools.

# Principals

LFC survey of elementary principals in New Mexico...

- 61.6 percent agreed job of principal too complex.
- 61.4 percent would not like to work in a field outside of public education.
- Almost 60 percent intend to stay at present school for >5 years.

# IMPLEMENTATION OF TURNAROUND STRATEGIES IN SCHOOLS STATEWIDE ARE VARIED AND COSTLY

- Research indicates turnaround efforts to reverse chronically low-performing schools nationwide and in New Mexico vary in size and scope and results inconclusive.
- This case study evaluated three schools using different turnaround strategies.
- Turnaround measurable gains costly and sustainability may decrease once the funding goes away, if program not carefully designed and maintained.

# Recommendations

## Legislature.

- Prioritize K-3 Plus funding and prekindergarten for districts willing to implement in all high-poverty schools.
- Continue to increase formula funding for at-risk students.
- Modify public education funding formula to align the training and experience (T&E) to the three-tiered licensure system adding an adjustment factor for effective teachers and leaders at high-poverty schools or factor an extra weight in the T&E matrix for teachers at high-poverty schools.

## PED.

- Use the budget process to hold districts accountable for using best practices at high-poverty and under performing schools.
- Create guidelines for placing highly-effective teachers and principals at low-performing schools.

## New Mexico public school districts.

- Make a concerted effort to distribute level one teachers across schools to avoid concentrating them in low-performing schools.