

FACT SHEET

ADDRESSING THE EQUITY GAP: ENSURING ACCESS TO EXCELLENT EDUCATORS FOR ALL STUDENTS IN NEW MEXICO

An effective teacher is valuable to a school, a school district, and the state, but even more importantly, an effective teacher can positively impact a student's education and career trajectory. Students' ability to escape poverty and close the achievement gap is directly related to their access to the most qualified and skilled educators. Because certain populations of students have historically had less access to the most effective public school teachers, the US Department of Education (USDE) has made it a priority to eliminate this equity gap. Likewise, the Public Education Department (PED) recognizes the need for all students in the state to have access to an effective educator.

Background

According to the New Mexico Effective Teaching Task Force's final report, research has clearly shown that one of the most important school-related factors influencing a child's academic achievement is the quality of their teacher. Studies have shown that if the most at-risk students are given the most effective teachers, this could close the achievement gap. Conversely, the data show that if a student is placed in a classroom with a low-performing teacher, the student will struggle to make up learning gains lost. Therefore to close the achievement gap, equal educational opportunity for every student must be guaranteed. Equal educational opportunity means ensuring that schools have the resources they need to provide meaningful opportunities for all students to succeed, regardless of family income or race. Yet, too often, students from low-income families and students of color are less likely than their peers to attend a school staffed by excellent educators, and are more likely than their peers to attend a school staffed by inexperienced or ineffective educators. It is essential that a priority be placed on working collaboratively to ensure that all children have access to the high-quality education they deserve, and that all educators have the resources and support they need to provide that education for all children.

In order to move toward the goal of ensuring that every student in every public school has equitable access to excellent educators, USDE Secretary Duncan announced in July of 2014 that each state educational agency (SEA) would be required to submit an updated plan describing the steps it will take to ensure that low-income and minority children are not taught by new teachers who are unqualified or inexperienced. Prior to this department request, the SEAs last submitted their plans in 2006.

Excellent Educators for All Initiative

Under the USDE's Excellent Educators for All initiative, each state was required to submit a state plan to the USDE to ensure equitable access to excellent educators by June 1, 2015¹.

¹ See **Attachment** for a comprehensive listing of all Educator Equity Plans submitted to the USDE and their application status.

According to federal guidance, each state plan is required to include the following information:

- documentation of the steps each SEA took to consult with local educational agencies (LEAs), teachers, principals, pupil services personnel, administrators, other staff, and parents regarding the state plan;
- identification of equity gaps, which will also include:
 - a definition of each of the following terms:
 - ✓ “inexperienced teacher”;
 - ✓ “unqualified teacher”;
 - ✓ “out-of-field teacher”;
 - ✓ “poor student”;
 - ✓ “minority student”; and
 - ✓ any other key terms used by the SEA such as “highly effective,” “effective,” or “ineffective” teacher;
 - a calculation of equity gaps, at a minimum, for poor and minority students for each of the three statutory terms of “inexperienced,” “unqualified,” and “out-of-field” based on the state definition of those terms; and
 - a description of how the SEA identified the equity gaps, including the sources of the data used for the comparison;
- an explanation of the potential causes of the identified equity gap;
- a description of the SEA’s steps to eliminate identified equity gaps, which include:
 - the strategies the SEA will implement to eliminate the identified equity gaps with respect to poor and minority students including how the SEA determined these strategies will be effective;
 - the timelines for implementing the strategies; and
 - a description of how the SEA will monitor its LEAs’ actions to “ensure, through incentives for voluntary transfers, the provision of professional development, recruitment programs, or other effective strategies, that low-income students and minority students are not taught at higher rates than other students by unqualified, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers”²;
- a description of the measures the SEA will use to evaluate progress toward eliminating the identified equity gaps for poor and minority students, including the method and timeline for the evaluation; and
- a description of how the SEA will publicly report its progress in eliminating the identified gaps, including the timelines for this reporting.

New Mexico Educator Equity Plan

Prior to submission of the state’s Educator Equity Plan, PED issued a public notice on May 13, 2015 seeking public comment on the state’s Educator Equity Plan. Specifically, PED was looking for stakeholders to comment on the following questions:

² ESEA, sections 9304(a)(3)(B) and 1112(c)(1)(L).

- what equity gaps currently exist in your community?;
- are there barriers to addressing those equity gaps?;
- how can those barriers be addressed?;
- have there been successful programs or efforts to address the equity gaps in your community?; and
- what is the best way data on equity gaps can be shared statewide?

Three stakeholder meetings were hosted in Albuquerque, Roswell, and Santa Fe. The following themes emerged from stakeholders on the specified questions:

- lack of adequate teacher preparation, in general, as well as how it relates to cultural competence;
- inadequate mentoring and professional development;
- lack of instructional leadership at the school site;
- competition for time and resources;
- teacher pay;
- geographic challenges; and
- school attendance zoning.

Regarding ongoing stakeholder engagement, PED made the following commitments:

- annual meetings to report on equity gaps and progress in implementing programs to address the gaps; and
- annual public reporting on educator equity progress through the district report card and PED website.

PED submitted New Mexico's Educator Equity Plan on June 1, 2015 to the USDE. The state plan included the following sections:

- stakeholder engagement – a summary of the engagement process;
- effectiveness: the foundation for equity – justification for the state plan's focus;
- equity gap analysis – an examination of students' equal access to effective teachers;
- root cause analysis – an investigation of the root causes;
- current strategies – an explanation of current efforts to eliminate the equity gaps;
- ongoing monitoring, support, and future analysis – a plan detailing how PED will share progress as well as next steps; and
- glossary – definition of terms used in the state plan.

Findings and Strategies for Implementation of State's Plan

In the process of developing the Educator Equity Plan, PED conducted a root cause analysis of why barriers in access to effective teaching exist. Through stakeholder engagement, many root causes were identified and coincided with each other. A central theme emerged that beginning teachers were unprepared for the classroom following completion of a teacher preparation program. Stronger, better aligned teacher preparation programs would allow new teachers to be effective in their first years of teaching by preparing teachers to deliver culturally competent instruction. New Mexico is one of the most culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse states in the country, and every teacher will require an understanding and ability to engage with students of different backgrounds.

Based on the findings, PED determined for teachers to be successful in the classroom with the necessary pedagogical and cultural tools, an environment must be created that strategically recruits and retains effective teachers. By rewarding effectiveness and providing continued support to teachers, PED can work in collaboration with school preparation programs to create the necessary environment for successful teaching in New Mexico.

PED has established several programs aimed at ensuring equal access to effective teachers across the state. For instance, new teacher preparation programs were created that focused on practice-based training and recruiting teachers with the cultural competency to be effective in their own communities. Those programs include: (1) PED's NMPrep, which will train individuals with a past record of proven success to begin careers as classroom teachers; (2) New Mexico Highlands University Prep, which will provide a rigorous and ongoing on-site training for up to 40 new teachers; (3) Aggie Prep, which is a program that supplies highly qualified science and math teachers to high need school districts; and (4) Northern New Mexico University's American Indian Education Training Program, which will identify and recruit at least 30 Native American candidates to pursue a teaching, counseling, or administrative degree. PED has also created the New Mexico pay for performance pilot program, which rewards New Mexico's best teachers and principals. Awards are prioritized for teachers and principals in low-performing schools based on schools grades and teacher shortage areas. Additionally, PED has established the Teachers Pursuing Excellence Program, which offers additional support to "minimally effective" and "ineffective" teachers. Participating teachers will attend a series of trainings on high-yield classroom practices as well as be partnered with a "highly effective" or "exemplary" mentor teacher.

As PED implements its plan, the state is committed to measuring progress, adjusting efforts when needed, and creating new and innovative support for students, teachers, and schools. In addition, PED will conduct future analyses to better understand the state's equity gap. These analyses will include working with colleges of education to help improve their performance, identifying and sharing best practice mentoring programs for first-year teachers, and implementing a teacher preparation approval process for training programs.

ATTACHMENT

Educator Equity Plans

State/Territory	Submitted State Plan to USDE	Approval of State Plan	Date of Approval
Alabama	Yes	Yes	September 28, 2015
Alaska	Yes	Yes	October 9, 2015
Arizona	Yes	Yes	October 7, 2015
Arkansas	Yes	Yes	August 13, 2015
California	Yes	Yes	September 29, 2015
Colorado	Yes	No	Pending
Connecticut	Yes	Yes	August 19, 2015
Delaware	Yes	Yes	August 25, 2015
District of Columbia	Yes	Yes	October 8, 2015
Florida	Yes	No	pending
Georgia	Yes	Yes	September 14, 2015
Hawaii	Yes	No	Pending
Idaho	Yes	No	Pending
Illinois	Yes	No	Pending
Indiana	Yes	Yes	August 11, 2015
Iowa	Yes	No	Pending
Kansas	Yes	Yes	September 25, 2015
Kentucky	Yes	Yes	July 24, 2015
Louisiana	Yes	No	Pending
Maine	Yes	Yes	August 24, 2015
Maryland	Yes	Yes	October 16, 2015
Massachusetts	Yes	Yes	August 7, 2015
Michigan	Yes	Yes	June 1, 2015
Minnesota	Yes	Yes	June 1, 2015
Mississippi	Yes	No	Pending
Missouri	Yes	Yes	July 30, 2015
Montana	Yes	No	Pending
Nebraska	Yes	Yes	August 25, 2015
Nevada	Yes	Yes	June 1, 2015
New Hampshire	Yes	Yes	September 14, 2015
New Jersey	Yes	Yes	September 24, 2015
New Mexico	Yes	No	Pending
New York	Yes	Yes	July 20, 2015
North Carolina	Yes	No	Pending
North Dakota	Yes	Yes	August 28, 2015
Ohio	Yes	No	Pending
Oklahoma	Yes	Yes	August 11, 2015
Oregon	Yes	No	Pending
Pennsylvania	Yes	Yes	August 19, 2015
Puerto Rico	Yes	No	Pending
Rhode Island	Yes	Yes	July 20, 2015

South Carolina	Yes	Yes	September 1, 2015
South Dakota	Yes	No	Pending
Tennessee	Yes	Yes	September 11, 2015
Texas	Yes	No	Pending
Utah	Yes	No	Pending
Vermont	Yes	Yes	September 29, 2015
Virginia	Yes	Yes	August 31, 2015
Washington	Yes	Yes	September 4, 2015
West Virginia	Yes	Yes	September 3, 2015
Wisconsin	Yes	Yes	August 27, 2015
Wyoming	Yes	No	Pending

USDE approved 34 states and territories as of November 9, 2015. Eighteen states and territories are awaiting approval.