

STATE OF NEW MEXICO
LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

REPRESENTATIVES

Rick Miera, Vice Chair
Roberto "Bobby" J. Gonzales
Jimmie C. Hall
Dennis J. Roch
Mimi Stewart
Jack E. Thomas

State Capitol North, 325 Don Gaspar, Suite 200
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501
Phone: (505) 986-4591 Fax: (505) 986-4338
<http://lesc.nmlegis.gov>

SENATORS

Cynthia Nava, Chair
Mary Jane M. Garcia
Gay G. Kernan
Lynda M. Lovejoy

ADVISORY

Andrew J. Barreras
Ray Begaye
Eleanor Chávez
Nathan P. Cote
Nora Espinoza
Mary Helen Garcia
Karen E. Giannini
John A. Heaton
Sheryl M. Williams Stapleton
Shirley A. Tyler



ADVISORY

Vernon D. Asbill
Stephen H. Fischmann
Howie C. Morales
John Pinto
Sander Rue
William E. Sharer

Frances Ramírez-Maestas, Director
David Harrell, PhD, Deputy Director

November 16, 2009 (revised)

MEMORANDUM

TO: Legislative Education Study Committee

FR: David Harrell

**RE: STAFF BRIEF: OFFICE OF EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY (OEA)
REPORT ON SCHOOL PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES**

Introduction

As explained more fully under "Background," below, the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) has been focused on school leadership at least since the 2001 interim. The most recent hearing on this topic was during the 2008 interim, when the LESL heard a report by the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) about activities in response to Senate Joint Memorial 3 (SJM 3), 2008, *School Principal Recruitment and Mentoring*. For the 2009 interim, the committee will hear a presentation by OEA about recent activities related to school leadership, most of them in response to SJM 3.

This LESL staff brief provides a context for the presentation, with particular attention to:

- activities in response to SJM 3;
- the implementation of school leadership initiatives;
- school leadership as a factor in the federal Race to the Top funds; and
- media attention to school leadership.

The staff brief concludes with a background section illustrating the LESC's interest in school leadership and explaining the impetus behind SJM 3.

Activities in Response to SJM 3

SJM 3 requested that OEA, the Public Education Department (PED), and the Higher Education Department (HED), in collaboration with school districts and institutions of higher education, develop a plan to enhance the recruitment, preparation, mentoring, evaluation, professional development, and support for school principals and other school leaders.

Supported by a grant from the Wallace Foundation, OEA took the lead in the study requested by SJM 3, assembling a wide range of interested parties for a series of meetings throughout the 2008 interim, researching the various aspects of the issues, and arranging presentations by recognized experts and practitioners in school leadership. The report that OEA presented to the LESC in November 2008 consisted mostly of explanations of and rationale for six recommendations "for strengthening New Mexico's capacity to attract and retain strong school leaders." The recommendations are summarized below:

1. Revitalize school principal standards: by devoting particular attention to alignment between the PED rule on administrative licensure and the recently adopted framework for the evaluation of principals and assistant principals; and by implementing a revised, standards-based process through which PED approves all educational leadership preparation programs in New Mexico.
2. Strengthen recruitment, incentives, and retention: by identifying potential school leaders; by considering financial incentives like a loan-for-service program; and by improving the working conditions through such activities as mentoring, internships, and defining school success in terms broader than just the adequate yearly progress of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB).
3. Develop and implement the New Mexico Leadership Institute: by supporting a collaborative framework for strengthening the preparation, mentoring, and professional development of school leaders through several specific programs, including a licensure program for aspiring principals, mentoring for new principals, intensive support for principals in schools in need of improvement, support for aspiring superintendents, and mentoring for new superintendents.
4. Establish data and accountability systems: by developing a database that, among other features, links higher education and public school data to track supply and demand and that captures demographic and academic data on leadership candidates.
5. Refine current certification requirements: by changing the required years of teaching experience to obtain a Level 3-B license and by developing a provisional school administrator license.
6. Refine and revitalize university principal preparation programs: by developing a core educational leadership curriculum for the colleges of education and ensuring transferability of this core curriculum and by having the colleges of education partner in the development of the New Mexico Leadership Institute.

In response to the report and the recommendations, the LESC endorsed several pieces of legislation during the 2009 session. Two of them were enacted:

- SB 123 (Laws 2009, Chapter 20), *Administrators in Accountability Reporting*, requires that data about administrative licensure candidates be included in the Educator Accountability Reporting System; and
- SB 133a (Laws 2009, Chapter 117), *Teacher Licensure Changes*, removes the requirement that applicants for a Level 3-B administrative license hold a Level 3-A teaching license for one year; and it creates a provisional Level 3-B license.

A third bill endorsed by the LESC, SB 124, *Create School Leadership Institute*, did not pass. As the title suggests, this bill would have created a school leadership institute administratively attached to HED and would have prescribed programs for the institute to offer, along the lines of the SJM 3 recommendations. The fate of the bill itself notwithstanding, however, the appropriation of \$200,000 to establish the leadership institute was included in the *General Appropriation Act of 2009*, creating what might be called a “funded unmandate.” Nonetheless, in response to letters from the Chair of the Senate Education Committee and the Chair of the House Education Committee, the then-Interim Cabinet Secretary of Higher Education said that HED was working closely with OEA “to carry out the intent” of the legislation.

Implementation of School Leadership Initiatives

Administrative Licensure

The legislation affecting administrative licensure enacted in 2009 made two substantive changes in licensure requirements in the *School Personnel Act*. The first change reduced from seven to six the minimum number of years of teaching experience required of applicants for administrative licensure. As of mid-November 2009, PED reports, the Professional Licensure Bureau has issued 22 education administration licenses to teachers taking advantage of this provision. Although these teachers had received their Level 3-A licenses, they had not taught under those licenses.

The second change was the creation of a provisional administrative license that PED may grant under certain conditions. The process begins with a request from a school district experiencing a shortage of qualified school principal candidates that PED issue a provisional Level 3-B license to a Level 2 teacher who the district believes has the potential to be an effective school principal. To qualify for such a license, the candidate must:

- meet the requirements for a Level 3-A license;
- be enrolled in a PED-approved induction and mentoring program in the school district; and
- be accepted into a PED-approved school administrator preparation program.

To maintain the provisional license, the licensee must receive satisfactory annual evaluations from the school district’s mentoring program and the school administrator preparation program. At the end of the four-year period, the provisional license may be converted to a regular Level

3-B license if the candidate has completed the district's mentoring program and the administrator preparation program.

As of mid-November 2009, PED reports that the department has received five applications for provisional administrative licenses – two from school districts (Los Alamos Public Schools and Roswell Independent Schools), two from charter schools (Aldo Leopold Charter School, in Silver City and Taos Academy, in Taos), and one from a Bureau of Indian Education school (Santa Fe Indian School). Because all the applicants met the criteria, each one received a provisional administrative license.

School Leadership Institute

The SJM 3 recommendations called for the Leadership Institute to offer five programs based on partnerships among school districts, institutions of higher education, regional education cooperatives, state agencies, professional organizations, and other parties:

- a track to licensure for aspiring principals;
- structured mentoring for new principals according to the skills in the principal evaluation system;
- intensive support for principals of schools in need of improvement;
- professional development, including internship and a mentoring program, for experienced principals who wish to become district superintendents; and
- mentoring for new superintendents, in conjunction with the Superintendents' Transition and Mentoring Program conducted by the New Mexico Coalition of School Administrators.

With the appropriation of \$200,000 noted above, together with an additional \$210,000 from the Wallace Foundation, the Leadership Institute is being established. According to OEA, the institute is to be housed at the University of New Mexico, which will provide office space as well as research assistance by a doctoral student in the College of Education. After reviewing a field of 12 applicants and interviewing three finalists, the interview team has selected Dr. Linda Paul, former superintendent of Aztec Municipal Schools, as the director of the New Mexico Leadership Institute.

A special kick-off event is scheduled for Friday, November 20, in Albuquerque (see "Media Attention to School Leadership," below).

Mentoring of New Principals

As part of the leadership initiative, OEA and PED have been hosting a series of meetings during the 2009 interim directed toward establishing the Principal Mentoring Network (PMN).

- The first two conferences – June 11 and July 31 – covered such topics as leadership institutes in other states, mentoring models currently used by school districts in

New Mexico, the 2009 legislation in New Mexico, the need for mentoring principals, best practices in the mentoring of principals, and resources for mentoring principals.

- In addition, a statewide training session for principal mentors was conducted on November 2 and 3, and a second such training session is planned for late winter or early spring 2010, both facilitated by the Southern Regional Education Board.
- Later in 2010, the PMN will schedule regional workshops on specific issues identified by participants in these other meetings or their districts or charter schools.

Another initiative of the PMN was the launch on October 27, 2009 of the organization's website, <http://www.LeadNM.info>. Described as "an integral component of the New Mexico Leadership Institute," this website is intended to be a tool "for supporting and linking the work of mentoring new and aspiring principals in districts and charter schools throughout the state."

Educator Accountability Reporting System

A presentation on this provision is scheduled for the December 2009 meeting of the LESC. See "LESC Staff Report: Educator Accountability Reporting System," forthcoming.

School Leadership as a Factor in Federal Race to the Top Funds

A state's laws and policies regarding school leaders are a factor in the state's application for Race to the Top funds under the federal stimulus program. As provided in federal regulations issued on November 12, 2009, there are six fundamental selection criteria:

- state success factors;
- standards and assessments;
- data systems to support instruction;
- great teachers and leaders;
- turning around the lowest-achieving schools; and
- general selection criteria.

For each of these six criteria, there are two additional types of selection criteria:

- "State Reform Conditions Criteria" (what the state has done or is doing); and
- "Reform Plan Criteria" (what the state will do).

While school leadership may figure into all six fundamental selection criteria to some extent, it is especially significant in two of them: great teachers and leaders and turning around the lowest-achieving schools. And in each case, the recent legislation and other activities noted above seem especially pertinent.

- Related to the selection criterion of great teachers and leaders is the reform condition criterion of providing high-quality alternative pathways for aspiring teachers and principals – that is, the extent to which the state has:
 - legal, statutory, or regulatory provisions that allow alternative routes to certification for teachers and principals, particularly routes that allow for providers in addition to institutions of higher education;
 - alternative routes to certification that are in use; and
 - a process for monitoring, evaluating, identifying, and filling areas of teacher and principal shortage.
- Also pertinent to the selection criterion of great teachers and leaders are several reform plan criteria:
 - improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance;
 - ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals;
 - improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs; and
 - providing effective support to teachers and principals.
- Among the provisions related to the selection criterion of turning around struggling schools are:
 - the reform condition criterion of intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and districts: that is, “the extent to which the State has the legal, statutory, or regulatory authority to intervene directly in the State’s persistently lowest-achieving schools . . . and in LEAs [local education agencies, or school districts] that are in improvement or corrective action status”; and
 - the reform plan criterion of helping districts turn around the lowest-achieving schools by implementing one of four school intervention models described in one of the appendices to the federal regulations: turnaround model, restart model, school closure, or transformation model.

Media Attention to School Leadership

Although school leadership is not likely to be front-page news very often, there is increasing attention to the issue among high-profile media outlets, suggesting a growing awareness of the importance of school leaders; and much of this attention has focused on New Mexico. This report will cite three examples: two recent and one upcoming.

- Early in September 2009, KNME, the PBS affiliate in Albuquerque, held a screening of a documentary financed by the Wallace Foundation called *The Principal Story*. As described by *Education Week*, this “56-minute film . . . chronicles the triumphs and travails of a veteran and a novice principal over a school year” as it follows the daily

activities of the two principals in their respective schools in Illinois: one in Chicago and the other in Springfield.

- The KNME invitation to the screening said that the film “reveals the complex social and political connections among children, parents, teachers, principals and superintendents . . . [and] shows the heart, commitment and skill that are required for leading and improving public schools in which more than 85 percent of students come from families living below the poverty-line.”
- Among the events depicted in the film are the experienced principal counseling a misbehaving student, who describes his violent neighborhood as a place “where you either get or be gotten”; and the second-year principal firing a low-performing teacher: “we’ve done all we can do, but she hasn’t done all she can do.”
- The Wallace Foundation supported the film as part of its work during the last decade to promote improvements in school leadership. Of particular interest in this case was overcoming what the foundation calls the “gap in understanding” of the principal’s essential role “as the leader of the team that drives instructional improvement.”
- The KNME screening included additional clips of interviews with principals at schools in New Mexico and a panel discussion featuring Dr. Veronica C. García, Secretary of Public Education; Dr. Richard Howell, Dean of the College of Education at the University of New Mexico; Mr. Winston Brooks, Superintendent, Albuquerque Public Schools; Ms. Cyndee Gustke, President, New Mexico PTA; and Ms. Kelly Callahan, New Mexico Principal of the Year.
- On October 12, 2009, *The Washington Post* printed an Associated Press story with the title “NM school goes from worst to among best in 3 years.”¹ The story relates recent events at Tohatchi Elementary School, in Gallup-McKinley County Public Schools, where 83 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-fee lunch and 80 percent are designated English language learners.
 - The story quotes Secretary García on the school’s “astonishing and . . . amazing” progress: between 2006 and 2009, student proficiency in math increased from 15 percent to nearly 78 percent and in reading from 28 percent to almost 71 percent.
 - Much of this success is attributed to the school’s first-year principal, Mr. George Bickert, described as “a buoyant character” who immediately learned all of his students’ names, who used data to identify and address his students’ needs, who communicated frequently with parents, and who made learning “fun and competitive.” For his part, the principal credits the faculty, staff, and parents who “rallied around the vision of excellence.”
 - Now principal at Crownpoint High School, Mr. Bickert has been succeeded by another principal who plans to maintain the school’s success.

¹ The *Albuquerque Journal* also carried this story, six days later.

- On November 20, 2009, another initiative of the Wallace Foundation will see its debut, together with the roll-out of the New Mexico Leadership Institute.
 - Produced in conjunction with the *New York Times* and slated to be shown on the *Times* Knowledge Network website (<http://www.nytimes.com/college/collegespecial3/>), the video *Roundhouse to Schoolhouse: Policy to Practice* highlights the school leadership policies in New Mexico, which the foundation believes to be some of the most comprehensive in the country.
 - The video features interviews with several New Mexico legislators and legislative staff; the Lieutenant Governor; several principals, superintendents and teachers; and university faculty members. It also portrays schools in session and principals in action.
 - This roll-out event will include a panel discussion and a roundtable discussion moderated by the newly hired director of the Leadership Institute; and a video of the event will be featured on the *Times* Knowledge Network website, as well.
 - As a prelude to this event, the presentation to the LESC will include a preview of *Roundhouse to Schoolhouse: Policy to Practice*.

Background

Previous Study by the LESC

The OEA report on school principal leadership initiatives is only the latest in a series of studies and hearings that the LESC has had on the issue of school leaders. In some cases, as noted above, these hearings have led to enacted legislation.

- As early as the 2001 interim, the LESC made the principal as instructional leader one of the committee's focus areas, holding a full-day hearing on the topic. During these presentations, the committee heard from various professionals in the field of educational administration, including university professors, state licensure officials, and practicing principals and superintendents, who collectively provided a multi-faceted view of the state of the principalship in New Mexico and across the country. The major issues at that time were the changing expectations in terms of student learning and instructional leadership, the uses of student performance data, the stressful working conditions, the insufficient compensation, and a looming shortage of qualified candidates.
- These themes continued through the 2002 interim, when the LESC heard additional testimony from national organizations, from model programs in other states, and from the New Mexico State Department of Education, which at the time was considering separate licenses for principals and for superintendents.
- During the 2004 interim, the committee formed the LESC School Principals' Work Group to study issues of compensation for principals and assistant principals that had arisen, in part, from the adoption of the three-tiered teacher licensure, salary, and

evaluation system in 2003. One of the recommendations of this work group was to base the principal's and assistant principal's salary on a "responsibility factor."

- During the 2005 interim, the committee's examination of school leaders took the form of extended testimony from the President of Teachers College, Columbia University, who had recently examined school leader preparation programs across the country. This examination found that the overall quality of educational administration programs in the United States was poor and that the degrees that these programs awarded were inappropriate to the changing needs of today's schools and school leaders. This testimony also proposed that New Mexico, with only approximately 200 graduate students in educational administration programs at any given time, was in a favorable position to institute systemic change and to provide the nation with a successful model for preparing effective school leaders.
- Compensation and evaluation of principals and assistant principals were the focal points of committee hearings on the issue of school leaders during the 2006 interim, leading to LESC-endorsed legislation in 2007 that implemented minimum salaries for principals and assistant principals, calculated by multiplying a school-level responsibility factor by the minimum salary of a Level 3-A teacher, and that required an evaluation component.
- Also enacted in 2007 were provisions to allow someone with the "highest-ranked counselor license" to qualify for a Level 3-B administrator's license and to grant, under certain conditions, an alternative Level 3-B license to someone with a graduate degree and at least six years' experience teaching or administering at the postsecondary level. Because PED does not collect data in terms of these two provisions, the department is unable to say how many licenses have been issued to counselors or postsecondary personnel under these provisions.
- Finally, during the 2007 interim, the LESC received a written report on SJM 15 (2007), *School Administrator Licensure Pathways*. This report recommended that, as an alternative to the standard administrative license, PED promulgate rules to establish a provisional school administrator license that would be renewable for no more than four years, during which time the candidate completes all of the current requirements for a Level 3-B license, which the report considered the "gold standard" for administrative licensure.

Senate Joint Memorial 3

Endorsed by the LESC, Senate Joint Memorial 3 (2008) was itself a response to needs identified in a joint study of the three-tiered teacher licensure, evaluation, and salary system by OEA, the LESC, and the Legislative Finance Committee. Presented to the LESC during the 2007 interim, this study found, among other points:

- that the effectiveness of school leaders is second only to classroom instruction among the factors that affect student learning;
- that school leaders in New Mexico face a number of challenges – some as a result of the NCLB, others related to the diverse student body that characterizes public schools today, and still others related to the growing importance of data-driven decision-making; and

- that the turnover rate of school principals and district superintendents is a cause of concern (one-half of New Mexico schools had had three or more principals in the last 10 years and 35 percent of districts had had three or more superintendents in the last four years).

Presenters

For this presentation:

- Dr. Scott Hughes, Director, OEA, will discuss the principal mentoring conferences and the development of the principal mentoring network; and
- Dr. Linda Paul, Director, New Mexico Leadership Institute, will discuss the activities of the institute thus far and plans for the future.