

MINUTES
Legislative Education Study Committee
Raton, New Mexico
May 27-29, 2026

Wednesday, May 27

The following voting, advisory, and guest members were present:

Voting: Chair William P. Soules; Senate President Pro Tempore Mimi Stewart; Senator Craig Brandt; Representatives Brian Baca, Joy Garratt, and Tanya Mirabal Moya.

Advisory: Senators Pat Boone, Harold Pope, Gabriel Ramos, and Anthony L. Thornton; Representatives John Block, Debbie Sariñana, and Nathan Small.

(1) Call to Order, Introductions, and Approval of May Agenda and April Minutes. Senator William P. Soules, Chair, LESC, called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. Chair Soules facilitated introductions of the members of LESC. John Sena, Director, LESC, introduced LESC staff. A quorum was present. LESC members approved the May agenda and April minutes.

(2) Community Welcome. Kristie Medina, Superintendent, Raton Municipal Schools, welcomed LESC to Raton High School and introduced Jason Phillips, the Raton School Board President, and Lori Chatterley, Mayor, City of Raton. Superintendent Medina shared that Raton Municipal Schools (RMS) serves about 810 students in prekindergarten through 12th grade, and that RMS serves as the hub for their rural community, which values hard work and service to others. Superintendent Medina shared some highlights of RMS educational programming, including but not limited to community partnerships for career and technical education (CTE) programs, social emotional learning initiatives, using high-quality instructional materials with fidelity, and a focus on strengthening instructional coherence.

Mayor Chatterley provided context about the city of Raton, highlighting the beauty of the area and the numerous activities available for visitors to experience as a gateway area between New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas. Mayor Chatterley also spoke about high-visibility transportation and water projects the city is partnering with the state and federal government to complete. Mayor Chatterley also mentioned work force housing initiatives they are anticipating in the future, and challenges the city is experiencing, such as dealing with vacant and abandoned buildings.

LESC committee members asked questions, including but not limited to the work RMS has done to address chronic absenteeism in the district, their freshman on track program, the 48 students who still received an out-of-school suspension this year after RMS' work to reduce out-of-school suspensions, the district's partnership with their local Regional

Education Cooperative, and Raton's partnership on the wildlife corridor project.

(3) New Mexico Public Schools Insurance Authority. Patrick Sandoval, Executive Director, New Mexico Public Schools Insurance Authority (NMPSIA), and Deborah Donaldson, Senior Vice President, Segal, presented an overview of recent trends in health insurance programs for public school employees. The presenters also provided context on the agencies' expectations for future premium increases as well as their plan for studying the impact of the statutorily mandated integration of Albuquerque Public Schools employees into NMPSIA's health insurance pool.

Members asked for additional information on the impact of Glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) medications on the user's health, as well as the medication's financial impact on NMPSIA. Other questions or comments from members included whether the agency provides employees with assistance on adopting healthy habits, how future premium increases will impact public school employees, and whether the agency will incur savings from further consolidation with other state health insurance programs.

(4) Superintendent Panel. Jessica Hathaway, Deputy Director, LESC, facilitated a panel with Kristie Medina, Superintendent, RMS; Amy Roble, Superintendent, Maxwell Public Schools; Tracy Alcón, Superintendent, Springer Municipal Schools; Kodi Sumpter, Superintendent, Des Moines Schools. The superintendent panel discussed funding opportunities, social emotional development, chronic absenteeism, and career and technical education (CTE).

Committee discussion included topics on student outcomes, CTE, teacher recruitment and attrition, and cell phone ban policies.

(5) Artificial Intelligence in K-12 Education. Saraí Ortiz, Policy Analyst, LESC, presented on New Mexico's policy landscape, the federal government's approach, and national trends regarding artificial intelligence (AI) in kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) education. New Mexico's approach consists of independent actions. The federal government continues to support the integration of AI in K-12 education, while state's efforts vary in their integration and expansion of AI in K-12 education.

Committee discussion included current resource limitations in K-12 education, student's cognitive development and responsible use of AI, and the potential of AI to broadly transform education.

Thursday, May 28

The following voting, advisory, and guest members were present:

Voting: Chair William P. Soules; Vice Chair G. Andrés Romero; Senate President Pro Tempore Mimi Stewart; Senator Craig Brandt; Representatives Brian Baca, Joy Garratt, Yanira Gurrola, and Tanya Mirabal Moya.

Advisory: Senators Pat Boone, Harold Pope, Gabriel Ramos, and Anthony L. Thornton; Representatives John Block and Debbie Sariñana.

(6) Indian Education Fund Update. Evan Chavez, Policy Analyst, LESC, facilitated a panel that included Katie Ann Juanico, Assistant Secretary of Indian Education, PED, and Edward Gurrola, Tribal Education Director, Pueblo of Sandia. The panel provided the committee with an update on the Indian education fund, which included information on PED's amendment on tribal consultation, funding mechanisms, and funded educational programming provided to tribal students.

Committee discussion included topics on the distribution of Indian education funds based on student count and the fixed amount awarded to New Mexico's 22 federally recognized pueblos, tribes, and nations.

(7) Tribal Education Technical Assistance Centers. Evan Chavez, Policy Analyst, LESC, provided an update on the Higher Education Department's (HED's) progress on developing one of two Tribal Education Technical Assistance Centers. The Native American Budget and Policy Institute at the University of New Mexico has been selected by HED to develop the tribal education departments and work with communities.

There were no questions from the committee.

(8) Distance Learning Update. Daniel Estupiñan, Senior Fiscal Analyst II, LESC, provided an overview of distance learning programs in New Mexico. Topics included the demographics of distance learning students, the structure of the distance learning programs they participate in, and fiscal trends associated with some distance learning programs. Other topics that were discussed included updates on recent legislative action on distance learning programs, and how LESC staff will approach its study of distance learning during the 2026 interim.

Members asked whether staff had identified contributing factors to the existing disparities in student representation in distance learning programs, including race and ethnicity. Other questions from members focused on funding mechanisms for distance learning programs, whether existing programs contain accountability frameworks in their provider contracts, and for additional information on student performance in these programs.

(9) School Board Professional Development and Training. David Chavez, Executive Director, Cooperative Education Services (CES), and Yolanda Montoya-Cordova, Lead Trainer, CES, presented information on CES' six-year study of school board trainings implemented with 13 partner school districts. The trainings were on student outcomes focused governance, with an emphasis on continuous quality improvement, changing adult behaviors, and aligning board actions with accountability.

Caroline Grant, Board President, Peñasco Independent School District, shared the district's experience participating in the CES training. The trainings and accompanying manual helped the district establish clearer district priorities, stronger accountability systems, better resource

alignment, increased transparency, and more positive relationships with staff and community.

Director Chavez suggested scaling CES trainings statewide through three phases, focusing first on high-needs districts. The state would need to increase coaching capacity and provide sustainable funding.

Committee members asked whether the school board or the superintendent in Peñasco sought the training, how trainers train board members resistant to training, and whether the Peñasco school board race was competitive.

Friday, May 29

The following voting, advisory, and guest members were present:

Voting: Chair William P. Soules; Vice Chair G. Andrés Romero; Senator Craig Brandt; Representatives Brian Baca, Joy Garratt, Yanira Gurrola, and Tanya Mirabal Moya.

Advisory: Senators Pat Boone and Anthony L. Thornton.

(11) Student Health Professionals. Conor L. Hicks, Policy Analyst, LESC; Patricia Trujillo, Ph.D., Deputy Cabinet Secretary, HED; Jody Weber, Ph.D., Education Administrator, HED; Brit Gallegos, Ph.D., Data Analyst II, HED; and Breezy Gutierrez, Senior Manager, College and Career Readiness Bureau, PED, presented to lawmakers on the current state of New Mexico's health workforce in schools and beyond. Mr. Hicks outlined the most recent licensure statistics for school-based counselors, social workers, psychologists, and nurses, while also providing lawmakers with a preliminary projection of the total number of student health professionals needed to serve New Mexico's student population. HED officials highlighted the consistent degree completion figures for these four student health roles and pointed to compensation as a barrier to entry for many interested in these fields. Finally, Senior Manager Gutierrez discussed the results of PED's school counselor survey, which indicated many school counselors have caseloads far exceeding recommended ratios, are often asked to perform duties outside of their purview and suffer from burnout.

Members asked about recruitment and retention strategies for student health professionals, the current compensation structure for these individuals, and possible legislative options to address student access to health services on school campuses.

(12) PED Rules Review. Conor L. Hicks, Policy Analyst, LESC, updated committee members on a proposed amendment to school nurse licensure rules by the PED. The proposed amendment would align nurse licensure rules with recently enacted state law concerning mentorship, evaluation, and licensure eligibility. Hicks noted the public comment period would remain open until June 3, 2026. Members did not ask any questions.

(13) Director's Report. John Sena, Director, LESC, presented the director's report, including the first LESC newsletter of the year. Director Sena thanked staff for stepping up in the face of recent

turnover and shared that leadership expect to extend hiring offers to two new analysts over the next few weeks. The interview process to fill the vacant committee services position will also begin soon. LESC staff recently extended offers to an intern and a teacher on special assignment for the interim. Director Sena thanked school staff in Raton for their hospitality. Committee members echoed these thanks and did not have any questions for the director.