



NEW MEXICO RISING
AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF
NEW MEXICO'S STATE PLAN
FOR THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT



New Mexico Rising

Engaging our Communities for Excellence in Education

NEW MEXICO RISING

An Executive Summary of New Mexico's State Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act

HISTORY

Over the past six years, New Mexico has been steadfast in the belief that every child in New Mexico, regardless of background, ethnicity, or zip code, can learn and achieve academic success. At every level, Governor Susana Martinez and her administration have worked to implement initiatives that deliver on the promise of a quality education for every one of New Mexico's 339,613 students. The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) has been at the forefront of pursuing a student-centered reform agenda, knowing that each year is an urgent opportunity to give our students the chance to succeed.

Under Governor Martinez, the PED established a strategic plan in 2011 (updated in 2017 to coincide with the state's ESSA plan) that included five priorities designed to deliver on the promise that every child can learn:

- *Smarter Return on Investment*
- *Real Accountability for Real Results*
- *Ready for Success*
- *Effective Teachers and School Leaders*
- *Options for Parents*

FROM NCLB TO ESEA WAIVER TO ESSA: BACKGROUND ON THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

In September of 2011 the PED sought a waiver that would build upon the state’s student-centered reforms, including educator evaluation (NMTEACH), school accountability (School Grades), higher standards (The New Mexico Common Core State Standards) and a new assessment aligned to those standards (PARCC). This ESEA waiver granted by the U.S. Department of Education waived federal requirements that were part of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). New Mexico was one of the first states to earn this federal waiver, which helped fast-track our state as a national leader for kids. Since receiving approval to implement the New Mexico Plan six years ago, the state has accelerated these reforms, made targeted investments, and delivered results for students.

In December of 2015 the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law. ESSA replaced the previous law, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2002, and updated its predecessor the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. Overall the law represents a shift to empowering State Education Agencies (SEAs) to deliver results for students with both greater accountability and flexibility. Because New Mexico put student-centered reforms in place throughout the past six years, the state is well-positioned to continue to build on our strong foundation *and* build upon what we heard from New Mexico communities as we continue our rise in student progress.

New Mexico’s state plan under ESSA builds on the momentum of recent student success while meeting updated federal requirements. The plan includes a continued commitment to robust college and career ready standards and assessments, meaningful school accountability, a commitment to ensure that all students are served by excellent educators, and dynamic strategies for turning around the state’s struggling schools. The plan also articulates New Mexico’s methodology for setting statewide academic goals and trajectories and an approach to strategically utilize federal funding to best meet the needs of our students.

Before New Mexico’s State ESSA plan was approved by the US Department of Education, several independent reviewers from across the country named New Mexico’s State ESSA plan the best in the country. Our plan has been recognized as having the most promising practices, as well being as well as being recognized for having “overall school ratings that are clear to parents and other stakeholders, building upon the state’s commitment to high standards and aligned assessments.” It was one of the first State plans approved by the US Department of Education and will be the new law of the land pertaining education in New Mexico until we have a new Federal education law. In fact Secretary-Designate Ruskowski was called to testify before congress to discuss the ESSA implementation process because New Mexico has what is widely recognized as one of best top State plans in the country.

NEW MEXICO RISING STATEWIDE TOUR: HEARING & RESPONDING TO STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) conducted extensive stakeholder engagement throughout 2016 and early 2017 in developing a state plan on behalf of New Mexico's students. In the fall of 2016, the PED embarked upon the largest stakeholder engagement community tour ever, partnering with New Mexico's leading public policy organization, New Mexico First, to develop the *New Mexico Rising Tour*. With the aim of providing every New Mexican the opportunity to engage in providing input for the development and design of the state's plan, the PED hosted a wide variety of engagement opportunities. These included public meetings, online surveys, targeted working groups, tribal consultation, and teacher and parent meetings. Additionally, the PED provided regular updates on its website:

<http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/ESSA.html>.

The *New Mexico Rising Tour* consisted of twenty-five (25) fully facilitated listening sessions across New Mexico's six largest communities. After the tour, New Mexico First released a series of eight reports: one statewide summary, one report for each unique community visited and one summary of tribal engagement. The statewide summary report and additional reports are available online at

<http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/ESSA.html>.

Additionally, the PED published a summary of fifty (50) major themes of stakeholder feedback that were incorporated into the state's ESSA plan or into other state policy, and will be integrated into upcoming efforts to improve the educational experience for our students. That document, *New Mexico Rising—Together*, is posted alongside the state's plan.

With the conclusion of the *New Mexico Rising Tour* and the extensive public engagement related to the Every Student Succeeds Act, the New Mexico State Plan was made available in draft form as submitted to the U.S. Department of Education. Further, the PED returned to all of the same communities visited, plus an additional stop in Santa Rosa to share how we responded to stakeholder input in developing our plan and to respond to specific questions community members had (whether related to ESSA or not).

Through the stakeholder engagement process we got feedback on many elements in the ESSA plan which lead to many changes, additionally many individuals elected to provide commentary on topics that were either not included in the state plan or were not germane to the federal law: state budget issues, oil prices, local governance issues such as the uneven implementation of state-funded initiatives, alternatives to the agrarian calendar, market privatization of the entire public school system, cursive handwriting, etc. While we didn't address these topics in the State plan, we had robust conversations on many topics with parents, teachers and administrators from every corner of the State.

STAKEHOLDER PLAN REVIEW: THE 30-DAY PUBLICATION PERIOD

During the 30-Day plan review period, the PED published a New Mexico-Rising survey online as a vehicle for all stakeholders to provide input. Overall, over 250 unique responses were received via the online survey. We also had groups and individuals who submitted letters or emails to the state's NM-Rising inbox, which was created for questions and uploads during the 30-Day review period. The PED received over fifty (50) emails to the NM-Rising ESSA email address throughout the publication period. Letters were submitted from individuals in addition to local and national advocacy groups. The PED reviewed all survey responses, emails, and letters received.

Teachers were the primary survey respondents, with approximately a quarter of all those who took the survey self-identifying as teachers. The second largest group of survey respondents self-identified as parents (12%), an encouraging sign that the state's New Mexico Rising Community Tour and recent family engagement efforts are helping to develop a greater voice from New Mexico's families.

During the 30-Day publication period, the PED was invited to present the state's draft plan to several groups of stakeholders and visited several communities in delivering these presentations. In-person presentations included a meeting with educational leaders from Jemez Pueblo, a formal tribal consultation at the Santa Fe Indian School, a presentation and discussion of the state's draft plan with Secretary Skandera's Teacher Advisory Council, a webinar hosted by Teach Plus, a presentation and discussion with school board members in Tucumcari (hosted by the New Mexico Schools Boards Association), and an interactive discussion where New Mexico's Teacher Leader Network brainstormed ideas on how to improve the state's plan. Several of the ideas heard during these in-person dialogues have been incorporated into the state's plan.

Additional areas of responsiveness via the March 2017 publication period include: multiple proposed modifications to New Mexico's teacher evaluation system; heavier guidance and oversight in the PED's approach to state and local tribal consultation; a renewed focus on high-performing students in the state's School Grades system; new career exploration resources for students, schools, and families; specific EOCs exams that will be phased-out; increased educator involvement in state level processes around assessment selection and competitive grants; and a pilot program for teacher residencies in select districts.

In addition, when the State submitted the draft plan to the US Department of Education, additional edits were made to ensure the plan is in compliance with federal law. Both versions of the State plan are available on the PED website.

The fifty (50) areas of responsiveness were highlighted as part of the state’s New Mexico-Rising Return Tour, where the team at the PED traveled to seven communities to share how New Mexico will create stability, continuity, and opportunity for schools and communities via its state plan. Secretary Hanna Skandera presented an overview of the final plan in each community, with a focus on these fifty areas of responsiveness, notably how the state will refine teacher evaluation, reduce testing time, and continue to equip, empower, and champion its educators.

The seven return tour community visits occurred between mid-April and late May, with the hope of reaching the state’s communities before the end of the school year.

Original ESSA Tour

- Gallup – Oct 12
- Farmington – Oct 14
- Santa Fe – Oct 17
- Albuquerque – Oct 18
- Roswell – Oct 27
- Las Cruces– Nov 15

Return Tour

- Farmington – April 17
- Albuquerque – April 18
- Roswell – May 8
- Las Cruces & Alamogordo – May 9
- Santa Fe – May 10
- Santa Rosa – May 15
- Gallup – May 25

NEW MEXICO'S STATE PLAN

LONG-TERM GOALS - SECTION 1

The first section of the state's plan is a testament to the recent progress teachers and students have made in New Mexico. In partnership with district leaders, teachers and parents, New Mexico demonstrated unprecedented progress in every objective measure including math, reading, and science in 2016. School Grades are on the rise, with 30,000 more students in A/B schools than five years ago. More high school students are taking and passing advanced placement courses and exams, and more educators are earning top-tier effectiveness ratings. New Mexico continued its commitment to this trajectory by highlighting bold goals in the first section of the state's plan.

The global economy is demanding more from our students, and they are rising to the challenge. New Mexico's long-term goals are aligned to the New Mexico Department of Higher Education's "Route to 66" initiative, which sets the vision for 66% of New Mexico students earning a college degree or postsecondary credential by the year 2030. Given the recent progress that the state's students, schools and educators have demonstrated, New Mexico is determined to accelerate our overall trajectory.

"These goals are ambitious but feasible. I'm happy that this plan lays out high expectations for our students." - ESSA survey respondent

Our ultimate goal is to make the state the fastest-growing in the nation.

By 2020, the state's academic goals include:

- 50% of students on grade-level in reading and math
- 80% of students graduating high school
- A dramatic decrease in the percentage of students requiring remediation

These ambitious goals create another opportunity for New Mexicans to pull together on behalf of our kids.

The long-term goals section also details New Mexico's commitment as a "truth-teller" in terms of how it approaches school performance and public transparency, reaffirming our belief that all of our children can achieve at the highest-levels and will respond to high expectations. It calls upon all New Mexicans to be steadfast in their commitment to providing honest and transparent information to students, teachers, families, and taxpayers.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM SECTION 1, LONG-TERM GOALS

New Mexico's long term goals elevate and promote the existing work related to our strategic plan's *Ready for Success* priority, which aims to ensure every NM student graduates high school ready for college and career.

Highlights from Section 1 include:

- Ambitious goals for the next six academic years that accelerate the speed at which the achievement gap is closed. This includes a higher standard for high school graduation and an ambitious trajectory for 4th, 5th, and 6th year graduation rates. It also includes academic goals for English Language Learners;
- Increased alignment of expected student outcomes of K-12 and higher education in New Mexico; and
- A commitment to build upon the feedback from ESSA stakeholder engagement throughout the implementation of the state's plan.
- Innovative tools and engagement opportunities for parents and families, including Academic Parent Teacher Teams and a recently-launched Secretary's Family Cabinet

CONSULTATION & PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT - SECTION 2

The second section of the state's plan outlines how the PED engaged with stakeholders in developing the plan. It also includes a section on how the PED will provide oversight and technical assistance to the state's districts and charter schools (LEAs), as well as reduce paperwork and other administrative burdens. Beyond the events of the *New Mexico Rising Tour*, the PED held an additional ten (10) community and parent events and developed four technical working groups to address major elements of ESSA. Through these multiple channels of engagement, nearly two thousand New Mexicans were engaged in the development of the New Mexico state plan. Throughout the plan and within the corresponding document, *New Mexico Rising—Together*, the PED incorporated ideas and input that are in the best interest of New Mexico's children.

"I think it is a great document and the process was an opportunity for stakeholder's voices to be captured and glad the state did respond."

Within this section the PED also summarizes the robust feedback received during the 30 day comment period. During that time New Mexico received input from an online survey, from emails with ESSA questions and ideas, and from letters sent to the PED. Several major themes of feedback were incorporated into the state plan.

The section also includes sample community visit agendas, screenshots from the state's ESSA website, links to reports created by New Mexico First, and details on the subjects tackled in the various technical working groups. Stakeholder groups were also created for Title I and Title III Directors who engaged in the important technical details of their respective federal programs. Additionally, within the second section the PED outlines its overall approach to providing support and monitoring the state's LEAs, including extensive training, professional development, and targeted investment opportunities provided by each of the agency's divisions.

"Making sure every dollar is spent with student achievement in mind is the right way to spend money. That must be the criteria of every financial/administrative decision." - ESSA survey respondent

HIGHLIGHTS FROM SECTION 2, CONSULTATION & PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

New Mexico's plan for consultation and performance management is centered on the *Smarter Return on Investment* priority which aims to ensure every state and federal dollar is maximized for student outcomes.

Highlights from Section 2 include:

- A full overview of the PED's partnership with New Mexico First for the *New Mexico Rising Tour*, which centered on working with communities to set a vision for student success; and
- A preview of the state's proposed approach to a consolidated funding plan for LEAs which will ensure that districts are spending more time and effort on the education of students and less time on burdensome or redundant administrative processes; and
- An announcement of the New Mexico-Rising Return Tour.
- Discussion of ongoing stakeholder engagement

ACADEMIC ASSESSMENTS - SECTION 3

The third section of the state's plan provides summary information regarding the state's academic assessments, with a focus on how the state meets federal requirements while addressing student assessment in other languages.

The PED has dramatically reduced the time spent on required student assessments over the past several years and has asked all LEAs to conduct assessment inventories to reduce testing time at the local level as well. The federal government has praised New Mexico's efforts to reduce testing and to require local inventory processes to do the same. Further, the PED has committed to decreasing time spent on the state's main standards-based assessment, PARCC, over time.

"High quality, rigorous assessments with data analysis is the only way to move student achievement if teachers and principals are trained and ready to meet the challenges."

- ESSA survey respondent

New Mexico has established a strong foundation of student assessment in reading, math. The state's focus is now on improving content and streamlining operations, which includes a commitment to returning quality, actionable and timely student data to educators and families. Throughout *New Mexico Rising—Together*, the PED has incorporated ideas and input about how to strengthen the state's overall approach to assessment, while committing to collaborating with educators on improvements to End Of Course Exams, student data tools, and open-source instructional resources. This section highlights multiple areas where New Mexico is reducing both cost and testing time while ensuring that every student has access to high-quality assessments that will propel their academic trajectory forward.

"Student achievement is of the utmost importance. NM's priority is to increase student success, focus increasing graduation rates, and reducing assessment time. Our current assessments have been excellent a valuable instrument in measuring student achievement. I am pleased to hear that we could possibly reduce the time of assessments."

- ESSA survey respondent

HIGHLIGHTS FROM SECTION 3, ACADEMIC ASSESSMENTS

The academic assessments section builds upon existing efforts aligned to the *Real Accountability for Real Results* strategic plan priority designed to create a transparent education system that is defined by academic excellence. The section also aligns to the *Ready for Success* strategic plan priority which strives to ensure every New Mexico student graduates high school ready for college and career.

Highlights from Section 3 include:

- A commitment to optimize student assessment and reduce testing time where possible; and
- Continued use of high quality, rigorous assessments that provide transparent information to teachers and parents allowing them to make informed decisions for students; and
- Bringing the English Language Proficiency assessment forward, with an expectation that students gain proficiency in English within 5 years.

ACCOUNTABILITY, SUPPORT AND IMPROVEMENT FOR SCHOOLS - SECTION 4

The fourth section of the state's plan includes the core functions of State Education Agencies (SEAs) as outlined by ESSA. These include the establishment of rigorous and transparent school accountability systems and systematic approaches to address consistently low-performing schools, including those schools that are not fully serving students from specific subgroups. New Mexico's School Grading system is well-established and meets many of the foundational elements required by ESSA.

"It's time we pay equal attention to the sciences all the way through the pre-college pipeline or our students are going to continue to be woefully underprepared for post-secondary education especially in STEM fields." - ESSA survey respondent

Based on stakeholder feedback, New Mexico proposes to create stability and continuity for our educators and families by maintaining a consistent approach to School Grades over the next two academic years (2016-17 and 2017-18). The state's approach to academic proficiency, student growth, graduation rates, and other indicators of school quality are each explained in detail. This section also includes a proposal for how New Mexico will incorporate additional stakeholder input and align with all federal requirements beginning with the 2018-19 school year. The State will release a transition year ESSA school grade report in Fall 2018 to help schools and districts understand the new federal requirements, and how they will factor into their own school's grade the following year. This approach is responsive to input from several different working groups, and creates an opportunity for all stakeholders to deeply understand the newest component of school accountability, English Language Proficiency.

The state's guiding principles and methodological details are both outlined in this section, as is New Mexico's commitment to high expectations for all students. Additionally, within this section, a methodology for identifying both Comprehensive and Targeted Schools is explained. As required by federal law, Comprehensive schools are identified as the bottom 5% of Title I schools, high schools with a graduation rate below 67%, or a Title I school that was previously identified for targeted (TSI), that has not demonstrated sufficient improvement after three years in that status. Targeted schools demonstrate low-performance, or large achievement gaps in a particular subgroup such as English language learners, students with disabilities, Native American students, and/or students from low-income communities. The PED will support the lowest performing schools by providing a variety of customizable options that best help schools deliver what their students need to be successful.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM SECTION 4, ACCOUNTABILITY, SUPPORT AND IMPROVEMENT FOR SCHOOLS, INCLUDE:

Strengthened by our commitment to the strategic priorities of *Real Accountability for Real Results and Options for Parents & Families* the New Mexico plan for this section solidifies the state’s commitment to parents and students receiving transparent information paired with opportunities to make decisions in the best interest of their children.

Highlights from Section 4 include:

- Enhancements to School Grades beginning in 2018-19, including: incorporating science, adding a growth to proficiency measure for English Learners, a new indicator considering how a school’s historically high-performing students are performing, and the removal of “bonus points”; and
- Updated and improved supports and interventions for struggling schools, including a roll-out of the state’s new NM-DASH progress monitoring system, a set of more rigorous interventions an LEA must implement if they do not exit low-performing status and a unique opportunity for struggling schools and districts to access additional resources through Direct Student Services.

SUPPORTING EXCELLENT EDUCATORS - SECTION 5

The fifth section of the state’s plan outlines New Mexico’s commitment to further equip, empower, and champion our educators. By building upon established evaluation and support tools, including NMTEACH, New Mexico outlines how it will support LEAs in the preparation, recruitment, licensure, induction, evaluation, professional development, and compensation of effective educators. The section explains the role of Title II federal funding in supporting educator effectiveness systems, and declares the state’s intent to continue to utilize this critical federal funding source to build upon the strong foundation that has been established over the past six years. This includes support for the ongoing training and credentialing of school leaders in the NMTEACH system. NMTEACH is the foundation of support for our educators and is the centerpiece to implementing the state’s *Excellent Educators For All Plan* that was approved by USED in 2015. Both the research and evidence-based case for meaningful educator evaluation is restated and cited within this section.

*"The strength of NM's education system rests on the strength of its teachers!
Developing teacher leaders is a high priority." - ESSA survey respondent*

There is also an overview of the state’s approach to improving educator preparation programs—a strategy that continues to be cited by stakeholders as a top priority for improving our education system. Throughout the section, there are examples of educator supports that both the SEA and LEAs can continue to invest in and support—from hard-to-staff stipends to teacher debit cards to the establishment of New Mexico’s first Teacher-Leader Network. As part of the state’s approach to ESSA over the past year, expanding teacher-leadership opportunities has been of first importance.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM SECTION 5, SUPPORTING EXCELLENT EDUCATORS

The excellent educators for all section is rooted in the *Effective Teachers and School Leaders* strategic plan priority which aims to place an effective principal in every school and an effective teacher in every classroom. Specific activities within this section are grounded in our moral and legal responsibility to fully implement New Mexico’s Excellent Educators for All Plan, which includes assurances that the state will pursue strategies and activities that ensure equitable access to effective educators, notably for our students from low-income communities.

Highlights from Section 5 include:

- Sustained and optimized efforts and investments to equip, empower and champion educators;
- A pledge by the PED to pursue legislation in response to stakeholder feedback regarding the weight of student growth, observations, and teacher attendance;
- A commitment to unveil the first-ever Educator Preparation Program Report cards in 2017;
- A plan to grow the state’s teacher-leadership opportunities, including an expansion of the New Mexico Teacher-Leader Network; and
- An ongoing commitment to multiple educator professional development and support systems, from Teachers Pursuing Excellence to 4OurFuture, both of which had record-high demand from the state’s districts and charters this year.

SUPPORTING ALL STUDENTS - SECTION 6

The sixth and final section of the state’s plan outlines New Mexico’s approach to creating systems of support to ensure a well-rounded and comprehensive education for all students. Key federal requirements of this section include how the state will protect and provide educational opportunities for children with disabilities, children and youth in foster care, migratory children, homeless children, and “neglected, delinquent and at-risk students” identified under Title I. New Mexico provides a full continuum of support for the state’s children through a combination of federal and state funding, from Pre-K programs to free-and-reduced price breakfast and lunch to STEM and Career and Technical Education (CTE) opportunities.

"Our future starts with our children and schools are where it all begins. If we produce high achieving students, we produce a community and an economy that is successful!" - ESSA survey respondent

ESSA reaffirmed the federal commitment to funding and programs designed for students with disabilities and English Language Learners. The state has a long-standing track record of dedicating significant staff and resources to ensuring that federal funding programs are appropriately administered and monitored, notably across all parts of Title I. The PED also explains its deepening investment in parental and family engagement, both via state and federal programs.

This section is a critical component of the state’s plan, as it outlines the various wrap-around services that are provided via federal funds, which ensures that our students are safe, healthy and well-served as they attend school each day. The section, when reviewed in concert with the other sections, represents New Mexico’s commitment to a well-rounded education that puts all students on-track for college and career.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM SECTION 6, SUPPORTING ALL STUDENTS

The PED remains committed to supporting the unique needs of every child, which has been the aim of the *Ready for Success* strategic plan priority, ensuring that every resource is best utilized on preparing students for success.

Highlights from Section 6 include:

- A continuation of the Results Driven Accountability program, which will serve over 100 schools via Title I funding over the next three years;
- A restatement of the state’s commitment to fully fund opportunities to prepare high school students for college and career, including ongoing AP fee waivers for students from low-income communities; and
- An overview of the state’s services for English Language Learners with accompanying resources and tools provided by the PED.

NEW MEXICO RISING, TOGETHER

New Mexico's education system has become student-centered. Our districts, schools and educators are held accountable for student performance and new standards and assessments are preparing students for a competitive global economy. To support our educators in this endeavor, New Mexico made targeted investments in some of the state's lowest-performing schools.

The results: 5,000 more students are proficient in reading and 7,300 more in math in just the last year. Almost every district (77 of 89) showed gains in math proficiency and 57 of 89 showed gains in ELA proficiency in the second year of PARCC administration. American Indian students outpaced others in their improvement, showing the highest growth in reading. And, the state's students achieved an all-time high graduation rate of 71% in 2016, an increase of 8 percentage points from the 2010-11 school year. New Mexico's students made gains in an unprecedented 19 of 21 measures in 2016, all while our schools raised the bar and implemented more rigorous benchmarks and gateways for student advancement.

New Mexico's education system is being transformed. And, our students are on the rise. The Every Student Succeeds Act will continue to reinforce New Mexico's place as a national leader in education expectations and student outcomes, and provides an opportunity for us to refine the systems that got us here.

We must continue to rise, together.