

2021 Legislative Session Priorities

PUBLIC EDUCATION OVERVIEW

The Public Education Department (NMPED) is committed to equity, excellence, and relevance. As we approach this year's legislative session, the NMPED is focused on ensuring New Mexico's students receive the funding and programs they need by building on recent investments in evidence-based practices and through a combination of innovative strategies, equitable use of available funds, and alignment across agency initiatives.



Strategic Alignment & Funding Requests

The NMPED has developed a strategic plan to address current inequities and promote student success. In addition to aligning to the findings of the Martinez/Yazzie consolidated lawsuit, the NMPED's four strategic pillars (e.g. supporting the whole child; closing the opportunity gap; promoting a vibrant educator ecosystem; and developing pathways and profiles of a New Mexico graduate) are reflected across the following legislative priorities:

» **Maintain current investments in public school funding.** Despite the economic challenges of the past year, the NMPED believes it is crucial to maintain funding for New Mexico's public schools. This means school districts and charter schools should not be negatively impacted by enrollment decreases due to the health pandemic.

The NMPED also will continue to advocate for funding that supports initiatives in indigenous, multilingual, and multicultural programs, the recruitment and retention of high quality educators, additional opportunities for students, and programs aimed at improving academic achievement and enrichment.

» **Martinez Yazzie remediation strategies (\$151 million).** The NMPED asks the Legislature to expand the use of funds currently earmarked for K-5 Plus and Extended Learning Time Programs to allow LEAs to supplement these extended learning opportunities with career technical education and community school initiatives. Stacking these programs on top of each other allows for a robust response to the Martinez/Yazzie lawsuit. *This proposal does not require new appropriations.*

» **Family Income Index (\$80 million).** The department recommends an appropriation from the Education Reform Fund for two years of funding targeted to schools serving students with the least amount of resources. While the current at-risk factor provides additional funding based on district-wide numbers of economically disadvantaged students, English learners, and mobile students, the Family Income Index would use individual student and family data to ensure money reaches students that need it most at the school level.

» **Eliminate the Impact Aid credit (\$35 million).** New Mexico has historically taken a credit for a portion of this funding. By ceasing to do so, federally impacted districts will keep the money intended to offset reduced property valuations, resulting in a significant impact for communities serving Native American students.





Accountability



Each of these proposals potentially mean school districts and charter schools would receive significant additional funds to support crucial programs. Equally important, though, is the need to ensure those funds are spent efficiently and effectively on evidence-based initiatives. Past legislation, namely Senate Bill 96 from the 2020 Regular Session and the Educational Plan provisions of Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 5 from the 2019 Regular Session, is important in providing the resources and guidance the department will use to track spending and programming.

Further, the department’s strategic plan will include concrete metrics by which to measure both departmental and local performance. By measuring academic progress and social emotional metrics, the department will demonstrate the need for additional resources and the efficacy of those investments.

Supporting Facts



The 2018 decision in the Martinez/Yazzie consolidated lawsuit sets both a legal and moral imperative for New Mexico to provide sufficient resources and programs to students who need it most. This obligation directs the state to remedy the existing inequities by innovative approaches to budgets and funding, re-imagining classrooms, engaging deeply with families and communities, and ensuring that local community needs drive all of our decisions and programs.

The economic disparity across our state disproportionately impacts Native American and Hispanic communities. According to 2018 data¹, 41% of Native American and 30% of Hispanic children were living in households experiencing poverty, compared to only 14% of their non-Hispanic white peers; numbers that have stayed relatively constant over the previous years. The proposed appropriation of funding per the family income index, coupled with the Impact Aid credit cancellation will help direct funding where it’s needed most and could be used to bolster community schools programming such as school-based health centers, meal distribution efforts, and more.

» Tribal Remedy Framework (\$30 million).

The NMPED proposes transferring \$30 million to the Indian Education Fund to support education efforts in New Mexico’s tribal communities. The appropriation would support implementation of the Tribal Remedy Framework, support tribal sovereignty, and provide resources for locally determined needs.

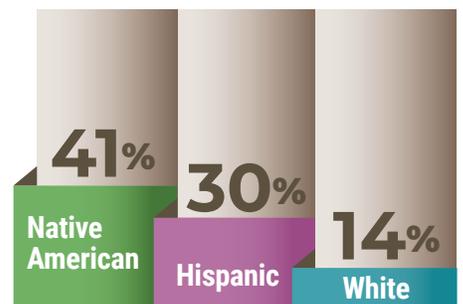
» Work-Based Learning (\$15 million).

The NMPED proposes funding to support salary matching for work-based learning and paid internships for high school juniors and seniors. This funding will be instrumental in three ways: supporting students with successful pathways out of high school, supporting statewide economic recovery, and supporting long-term shifts in high school redesign that will result from lessons learned through the pandemic.

» Closing the Digital Divide (\$10 million).

The NMPED acknowledges that despite huge financial and logistical efforts to ensure all New Mexico students have both the digital devices and the Internet connectivity they need to effectively access distance education, there is still much work to do. This proposal would continue efforts to ensure every student has a device and the connection needed to use it, so that they can access digital content and instruction, both during the health pandemic and in the future.

New Mexico Children Living in Poverty



¹ <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/>