

Welcome Back!

The school bells are ringing, welcoming teachers, students, and families back to a new year. Are you up for a little homework? The Public Education Department team has put together a quick overview of all the reasons we're excited about the school year (along with an array of resources for educators and families). Read and learn about what lies ahead. Visit ped.state.nm.us and keep up on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

What's New & Exciting

Math Is Me

What is your "math identity"? Too many people think "math is not for me". We want to change that perception. Math is for everyone, and whether you know it or not, you probably use math hundreds of times a day. Making a recipe? Calculating how long it'll take you to get to an appointment? Budgeting for a home improvement project? All of those activities stretch those math muscles.



We want all students to see themselves as budding mathematicians, so among a range of work, PED is launching a series of supports for teachers to help students find their math identities. More info [here](#).

In addition, the PED's College and Career Readiness Bureau is working hard to ensure students see the real-life value of math through the [Careers2Communities](#) program, which helps students answer the all-important question: *When will I ever use this?* The curriculum and educator professional development that supports it are picking up steam across New Mexico schools and districts.

Goals: Attendance/Achievement/Attainment

Administrators, teachers, school boards, the PED—we're all working hard to improve academic outcomes for our students. The pandemic had a serious impact on our progress, but we know we have to move the needle for our students, especially in these three areas:




Be Present!: Students who are chronically absent — defined as missing 10 percent or more of school days — can disrupt mastery of reading and math skills and cause students to fall behind and even drop out. Showing up is also an important element in a student's mental health. The PED is dedicated to supporting our districts and charter schools in their attendance policies and attendance improvement plans and in providing interventions and strategies.

Additionally, our goal is to streamline and standardize reporting so that absenteeism data is accurate and timely.

- Learn more about the [Attendance for Success Act](#)
- Check out the PED's [Annual Attendance Report Dashboard](#)

Testing, Testing: Why are assessments important? Which student takes what test? Measuring where students are is crucial to ensuring that they are mastering grade-level standards. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to annually measure the achievement of all students



who are enrolled in public schools. What's new this year? The pandemic wreaked havoc on state assessment schedules and requirements, but schools are back on track this year.

→ [Explore the data](#)

→ [Learn more about assessment schedules and state and federal requirements for assessments and find administrator, educator, and family/student resources](#)

Caps and Gowns: New Mexico's graduation rate has been trending upward, from 63% in 2011 to 77.8% in 2021. We want to see that trendline jump, instead of creep upward, until we meet (and exceed!) the national graduation rate of 85.3%. New Mexicans understand that a high school diploma is a vital entry ticket — not just to college but to the workforce. We know that student engagement drops off in high school, which suggests the traditional high school model doesn't always work for everyone.

This year, we're looking for a new model. We've named 20 New Mexico high schools "[Innovation Zones](#)" with funding and support to expand Career and Technical Education, work-based learning, and other options to make school as relevant as possible. We can't wait to see what our Innovation Zones come up with so we can spread the best ideas across the state.

Nuts and Bolts

COVID/Health & Safety


COVID-19 Guidelines: Check with your local district, school, or charter school for guidance specific to your school. Remember that everyone ages 6 months and older is eligible for [COVID vaccines](#), which remain the absolute best protection against serious illness. Updated guidance for schools in the [COVID Response Toolkit](#) will be based on updated guidance from the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the current Public Health Order.

RAVE: Keeping our school communities safe requires quick communication in emergencies, and now schools have a tool to do that. Every K-12 educator in New Mexico now has access to a panic button to summon help and alert others in case of any emergency. The Rave Panic Button app, developed by Rave Mobile Safety, is a smart-phone application that allows users to simultaneously connect with 9-1-1 and first responders and send an alert to on-site staff in the event of an emergency.

MEALS/NUTRITION: Almost three-fourths of NM students (71%) will eat for free at school this school year, thanks to 2020 legislation. Although the federal government reinstated co-pays for reduced-price meals, HB1 eliminated those co-pays in New Mexico. For students who don't qualify for any meal assistance, the maximum co-pay for a school meal is just 40 cents.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: This year, 68 schools received grants totaling \$7.4 million to fund planning or implementation of the [community school strategy](#), which harnesses specific programs and practices shown to improve academic outcomes, especially in schools with high numbers of students from low-income families. That could include on-site dental or medical clinics if the community identifies that as a need. We're thrilled to watch this program grow and spread to new schools each year.

DISCIPLINE PRACTICES: Across the country, schools are reporting higher levels of discipline issues, and one suspected cause is childhood trauma. Whether caused by the pandemic, the tragic wildfires, or another impactful incident, nearly everyone these days is suffering from some level of



collective trauma, including our kids. The PED has a new staff position — a Prevention, Response & Resiliency Coordinator in the Safe and Healthy Schools Bureau — to help guide districts in trauma-informed and trauma-responsive practices regarding discipline and attendance. The goal is to meet students where they are to improve academic outcomes and to help them cope with challenges in their lives. Districts and charter schools create their own discipline policies based on the needs of their communities, and the PED will continue providing resources, professional development, and technical assistance to help improve attendance and decrease suspension and expulsion.

Read about the [International Institute for Restorative Practices' Safer Safer Schools Program](#).

What else is new this year? Adult recreational use of cannabis was legalized in New Mexico in June 2021, and schools since then have reported an uptick in related student infractions. The bottom line: Cannabis is still illegal for anyone under age 21. Families and parents should remain diligent about keeping cannabis products out of the hands of children. Research shows [it's not healthy for those developing brains](#).

At School

Creative Tools

The Public Education Department has made a multimillion dollar investment to offer every K-12 student and teacher in New Mexico access this school year to a suite of digital tools for designing creative and persuasive communications.

Through a partnership with Adobe, the agency is offering full-access licenses to Adobe Creative Cloud, which includes more than 20 industry-standard apps for design, photography, video, and web. We can't wait to see what our students can create with these tools!

Teacher Recruitment/Licensure

Pinning down the exact number of teacher vacancies at any given moment across our 89 districts and 100 state and local charter schools is an ongoing task, but we do know this: We need a highly qualified, well-prepared teacher in every classroom to make sure we move the needle on academic achievement for our students.

We're making progress on the workforce crisis: Since January 2022, PED has issued more than 1,700 new teacher licenses. And why not? New Mexico is a great place to be a teacher! Our 2022 salary increases brought average teacher pay to the highest in the Southwest region. In addition, the PED works closely with the New Mexico Higher Education Department and our college and university-based teacher preparation programs to support well-funded pathways into the profession, whether you're in high school or retired. Check out all the options for [educator prep programs and pathways](#).

Not ready to commit? New Mexico schools still need qualified substitutes. Apply here for a [substitute teaching license](#).

Literacy

While this school year will hone in on improving math proficiencies and helping students (and families) discover their “math identities,” improving literacy skills will not be any less important. Teachers for grades preK through third grade are receiving training on Structured Literacy, which is the science behind how children learn to read. In addition, first graders are screened for dyslexia.

Click here to:

→ Learn more about [Structured Literacy](#)



→ Check out [Storytime with Severo](#), PED’s literacy and humanities director who regularly reads children’s books (in English and Spanish) on YouTube.

→ Drop by the east side of Jerry Apodaca Building in Santa Fe (300 Don Gaspar) where the PED is headquartered to leave or pick up a book at our Little Lending Library, which was built and installed over the summer.


School Calendars

How do we move the needle on academic improvement in New Mexico? One research-supported answer is to give students more instructional time with a highly trained teacher. The legislature appropriated more than \$237 million for an array of programs that do just that: This school year, 40 districts and 77 state charter schools are participating in one of three extended learning time programs. Local districts and charter schools work with their communities to decide how — or whether — to participate. Here’s the breakdown:

- **Extended Learning Time Program:** Adds 10 days to the school calendar (eight days for four-day-a-week districts). This program is particularly appropriate to help students cross the bridge from elementary to middle school or from middle school to high school. ELTP has a defined focus on social and emotional learning, and districts and schools design their own programs.
- **K-5 Plus Program:** Adds 25 days at the start of the school calendar for the youngest learners (20 days for four-day-a-week districts). The program was designed to give kindergarten through second-graders a 25-day jump at the start of the school year to help build relationships with the teacher and set the foundation for literacy work. It later expanded to include third-, fourth- and fifth-graders. Just like ELTP, districts and schools design their own programs, which can focus on community-based learning, STEAM and STEM projects, youth leadership or social-emotional learning.
- **K-12 Plus Program:** Expands K-5 Plus through high school graduation but with additional flexibility. The objective is to demonstrate that increased time for all students narrows the achievement gap between at-risk and other students, increases cognitive skills and leads to higher student achievement. K-12 Plus does not have to be school-wide, and participating districts and charters can choose which grades to begin with and grow the program.

Equity

The PED believes in all students’ ability to succeed, regardless of race, ethnicity, disability status, or socioeconomic status. The PED believes in the strength of New Mexico’s diverse communities and in the inherent value of our multilingualism, resilience, creativity, culture, and compassion for one



another. Much of the work at the PED is around ensuring all students receive a culturally and linguistically responsive education that meets their social, emotional, and academic needs.

To learn more about PED's pillars and pathways for transforming education in New Mexico, check out our [2022 Comprehensive Strategic Plan](#).

The PED is here to support students in their education journey and to ensure administrators, educators, and our education community has access to resources and information. The PED leadership team helps guide New Mexico in several areas, including standards, teacher professional development, literacy and math initiatives, equity and school transformation, policy, and others.

The [PED Leadership Team](#):

- **Secretary Kurt Steinhaus**
- Deputy Secretary of Identity, Equity, and Transformation **Vickie Bannerman**
- Deputy Secretary of School Transformation and Innovation **Angelo Gonzales**
- Deputy Secretary of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment **Jacqueline Costales**
- Managing Director **Seana Flanagan**

Departments under our Deputy Secretary of Identity, Equity, and Transformation play an intricate role in ensuring our students are healthy, secure in their identity, and holistically prepared for college, career, and life.

Learn more about the:

- [Black Education Act](#)
- [Hispanic Education Act](#)
- [Indian Education Act](#)
- [Special Education](#)
- [Language Education](#)

ANTI-RACISM ANTI-OPPRESSION HOTLINE: Students, families, and community members can report school-based incidents of racial bias by calling the Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression Hotline, which is open to anyone. The hotline is staffed by a trained PED employee from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday; after-hours callers can leave a message.

To report an incident:

- Call (833) 485-1335
- Email ARAO.Hotline@state.nm.us
- Fill out the online form at bit.ly/ARAOHotline

TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY AND TRIBAL CONSULTATION: Many districts and charter schools serve students who reside within Indian Tribal, Nation, and Pueblo communities. NMPED respects Tribal sovereignty, so COVID-19 protocols in those areas may differ from those of the state. To promote the physical, social-emotional, and academic well-being of tribal students, districts should have regular tribal consultation meetings with local tribal leaders. Having regularly scheduled consultations with tribal leaders is particularly important to help keep Native American students and their families' safe during the pandemic.

To learn more:

- [Tribal Consultation Guide](#)

- [Quick Reference Guide](#)

EQUITY COUNCIL SUPPORT HUB: The PED will launch the Equity Council Support Hub in September. The Hub includes a Support Team, Equity Facilitators, and Service Providers with expertise in racial equity, community-based education, coaching, community organizing, and educational transformation.

Learn more:

- [Equity Councils Brief](#)
- [Equity Council Website](#)
- [Equity Council Trainings and Webinars](#)

At Home

Community & Family Engagement Opportunities

Families and a good support system are often integral to a student's academic success. PED's [Community Engagement](#) team includes both community/civic, teacher, and student liaisons to ensure all voices have a seat at the table.

The Community Engagement team oversees the [Community Advisory](#), which gives PED feedback on various educational policies and provides a direct connection between the state and PED stakeholders.

The team also manages the [State Ambassadors](#) (a group of experienced educators) and the [Teacher of the Year](#) program, giving PED an ear in the classrooms.

Want to know more? Reach out directly to:

- **Mark Kolokoff**, Youth and Community Liaison: Mark.Kolokoff@state.nm.us
- **Norma Vazquez**, Family Engagement Coordinator: Norma.Vazquez@state.nm.us
- **Matthew Martinez**, Director of Community Engagement:
Matthew.Martinez1@state.nm.us

State Act Advisory Councils advise the Secretary, Deputy Secretaries, and Directors on important matters for students in New Mexico, including those identified as at-risk in the Martinez and Yazzie Consolidated Lawsuit.

Learn more about the:

- [Bilingual Multicultural Education Advisory Council](#)
- [Black Education Advisory Council](#)
- [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Panel](#)
- [Hispanic Education Advisory Council](#)
- [Indian Education Advisory Council](#)