



Community Schools Division Legislative Brief

January 2024

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS SUCCESS

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS SHOW PROMISE IN ADDRESSING MARTINEZ YAZZIE CONSOLIDATED LAWSUIT

Established Community Schools show statistically significant higher graduation rates than in their matched comparison schools by Yazzie Martinez student subgroups.



Students Who Qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch



Students with disabilities



Native American Students

Ask of the NM State Legislature: \$12.5M

Implementation Grants, Evaluation & Technical Assistance

NEED FOR STATEWIDE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS EVALUATION

The New Mexico Community School Statute, established in 2013 and amended in 2019, continues to support the growing and compelling body of evidence on the efficacy of the community schools strategy as a strong foundation for achieving positive outcomes for students, families, and communities.¹ Positive community school outcomes result from quality implementation, and evidence-informed practice point to three essential elements for an effective, thriving system of community schools in New Mexico:

1. Regional and local **technical assistance** (TA) to promote the community school pillars of practice with fidelity, adapting them for each community school's context;
2. A statewide model of **evaluation** to ensure consistency, quality, and availability of data to inform technical assistance and guide implementation, establish indicators and baseline measures to assess fidelity for learning and improvement, and monitor progress toward outcomes for accountability and advocacy; and
3. Systemic and financial **sustainability**.

While each of these three supports for community schools are stated as essential in the New Mexico Community Schools Statute, they are currently not funded by the New Mexico State Legislature. **This legislative brief outlines the current landscape of community schools in New Mexico and elevates the need for a statewide process and outcome evaluation that is inextricably linked to technical assistance.** Sustainability will be established in a report from the House Memorial 44 (HM44) Task Force on Community Schools. The preliminary report was given before the 2024 legislative session; a final report for HM44 will be completed in November 2024.

¹ "Illustrating the Promise of Community Schools: An Assessment of the Impact of the New York City Community Schools Initiative." RAND Corporation, 2020.

THE HISTORY OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN NEW MEXICO

Community schools cultivate partnerships and align resources to bring mutually beneficial supports to the school and community. These supports often include physical health and mental health, social services, expanded learning time, family and community involvement, and community-connected learning environments. The Learning Policy Institute (LPI) conducted vast research on community schools in New Mexico (2017, 2020, 2023) and found that investing in community schools “brings improved attendance, behavior, engagement, and academic outcomes, **especially for students with poverty-related learning challenges.**”²

After the 2018 *Martinez Yazzie Consolidated Lawsuit* decision, New Mexico educators and advocates identified the community school strategy to address these educational inequities for the most at-risk students. The New Mexico State Legislature established the Community Schools Statute³ in 2013, which was amended in 2019, to fund implementation through grants to be administered through New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED).⁴ As of 2023, there are 91 community schools supported by the NMPED grant program with another 59 community schools funded from various sources. These 150 community schools are transforming the landscape of education with an array of integrated and coordinated supports and services for students, families, and communities across the state.

THE DIFFERENCE A COMMUNITY SCHOOL MAKES

Community schools contribute to and prioritize student well-being, their sense of belonging and school connectedness, as well as their academic achievement. They also act as community hubs that support the broader needs of families and the community. The sections below highlight those findings and stories.

Improved New Mexico VISTAs Scores: Preliminary Results from Established Community Schools

New Mexico VISTAs designations celebrate the success of the state’s highest performing schools, identifies schools that the department will support with federal grant money, and provides families with an opportunity to learn more about their local schools. The MRI and CSI designations receive interventions such as federal grant money, whereas Traditional and Spotlight designations show excellence. In school year 2022-2023, PED’s shows a 20 percent improvement of the VISTAs scores in community schools, with 45% remaining steady or unchanged. 30 percent of established community schools have improved from 2019 to 2023, while 60% stayed the same. Zero percent have declined from 2022 to 2023, and one percent declined from 2019 to 2023. These data points indicate that established community schools in full implementation

² Maier, A., Daniel, J., Oakes, J., & Lam, L. (2017). Community schools: An evidence-based school improvement strategy. Learning Policy Institute and the National Education Policy Center.

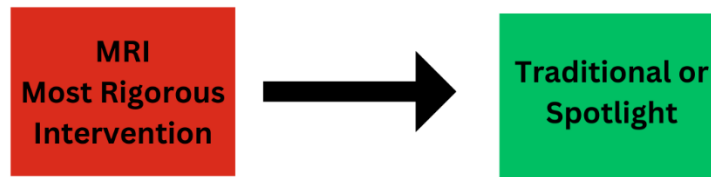
³ Community Schools Statute, CH. 22, ART. 32 NMSA 1978

⁴ Oakes, Jeannie, and Daniel Espinoza. “Community Schools the New Mexico Way.” Learning Policy Institute, 2021.

may play a role in the improvement of student achievement and other school performance indicators in New Mexico.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS VISTA SCORES MOVE IN A POSITIVE DIRECTION

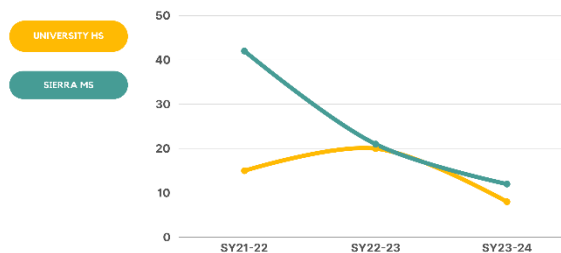
30% of established Community Schools improved from 2019 to 2023 and 60% stayed the same. 0% have declined from 2022 to 2023 and 1% to have declined from 2019 to 2023.



Improved Attendance and Behavior: Preliminary Results from Roswell and Peñasco Community Schools

In Roswell, community schools implemented prevention and intervention substance abuse curriculum through the community schools efforts with partners, **resulting in University High and Sierra Middle School seeing a significant decline in substance abuse infractions in school year 2023-2024.** Roswell began supporting Community Schools in 2019 with a community school grant award from NMPED for Sierra Middle School to begin planning their community school strategy. Several schools in the Roswell Independent School District (RISD) followed, including University High School, El Capitan Elementary School, and Mesa Middle School. In 2023, Roswell ISD reported that they are **showing lower rates of drug use and higher rates of graduation in community schools versus non-community schools in the Roswell ISD.**

ROSWELL ISD: COMMUNITY SCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE INFRACTIONS OVER TIME



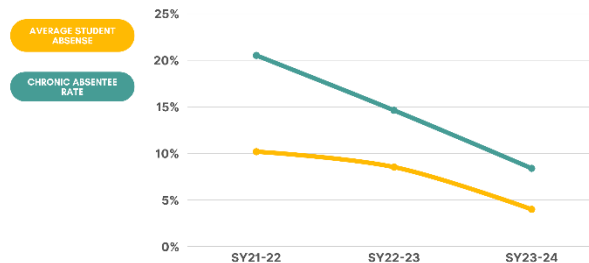
Source: NM Powerschool site-level data

Note: 2023-2024 data is pending certification 12/23

Peñasco Elementary School showed higher levels of student attendance and parent and family engagement versus the non-community school middle and high schools in the district. Peñasco Independent School district (PISD) began supporting community schools in 2019 with a Community Schools

grant award from NMPED. The adjacent middle and high school in PISD did not become community schools at that time.

PEÑASCO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT ABSENCE RATE OVER TIME SINCE BECOMING A COMMUNITY SCHOOL



Source: NM Powerschool site-level data

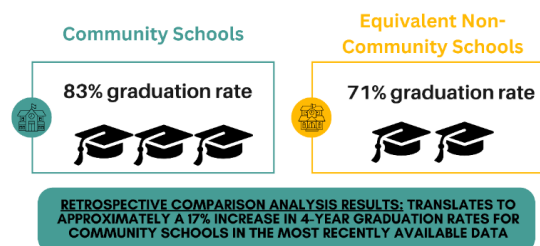
Note: 2023-2024 data is pending certification 12/23

Increases in Graduation Rates

In school year 2021-22, NMPED’s Research and Evaluation team completed an analysis of four-year graduation rates in community schools to understand the contribution the community school strategy has on graduation rates. The Research and Evaluation team found that being a community school is estimated to have a 12 percentage point increase in the four year graduation rate relative to their matched comparison schools.⁵ **This is equivalent to moving from a 71% graduation rate to an 83% graduation rate.**

Perhaps most significantly, the analysis looked at results among student groups, meaning it explored graduation rates specifically for students who qualify for free or reduced lunch, students with disabilities, and Native American students. **The analysis found graduation rates for these student groups to be statistically significantly higher in established community schools than in their matched comparison schools.** These findings affirm that the community school strategy holds promise to help address educational inequities for the most at-risk students in response to the *Martinez Yazzie Consolidated Lawsuit* decision.

GRADUATION RATES: COMMUNITY SCHOOLS AND EQUIVALENT NON-COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



⁵ Researchers used a propensity score matching (PSM) design in order to construct a similar comparison group for established community schools. The propensity score matching method was based on observable characteristics including: race and ethnicity demographics for the school, the percentage eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL), the percentage of students with disabilities (SwD), and the percentage of students who were identified as English Learners (EL). The four most similar Title 1 schools based on the above characteristics were used as comparison for each established community school. A simple comparison of established community schools to non-community schools that does not use propensity score matching would understate the impact of community schools because of differences in the communities they serve.

NEED FOR STATEWIDE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS EVALUATION

Early evidence makes the case for community schools and point to the need for a comprehensive, rigorous, and systematic NM statewide community schools' evaluation to determine if statewide data follows the trend of these case studies. Apex, an evaluation team of contractors, and the NMPED are collaborating under a preliminary scope of work to build a foundation for such an evaluation including a blueprint for a data ecosystem, called the Community Schools Data Hub. The goals in the scope of work include developing and aligning process and outcome indicators, forming a representative evaluation and data committee team, and performing a case study to explore and identify promising community school strategies and practices. These goals complement the LPI's recommendations in their 2023 report, "New Mexico Community Schools; Long Term Considerations", commissioned using federal funding through a congressionally directed spending award. These preliminary steps will prepare the evaluation team to perform a full statewide evaluation using a mixed methodology to study the implementation process in the shorter-term and longer-term outcomes of community schools in New Mexico. The first community school evaluation report will be completed by the end of school year 2023-2024.

Led by an evaluation consortium of seasoned and passionate professionals with both individual expertise and organizational capacity to support the breadth and depth of the statewide initiative, the evaluation will ensure consistency, quality, and availability of data to (1) inform TA and guide implementation; (2) establish indicators and baseline measures to assess fidelity to the model for learning and improvement; and (3) monitor progress toward outcomes for accountability and advocacy. The evaluation plan will emphasize and facilitate using data for these purposes by authentically engaging relevant perspectives from state-level leaders, supporting and implementing the model in the field, and the voices including students and parents most affected by community schools.

The proposed evaluation plan for New Mexico community schools is deeply and intentionally intertwined with the TA and implementation design for scaling, supporting, and sustaining a statewide system. **The research is clear—in order for New Mexico community schools to achieve their desired outcomes, implementation quality matters.** As such, the plan will not only evaluate outcomes, but is designed to provide a robust and durable platform including a data ecosystem to support site-level, district-level, and state-level evaluation, learning, and continuous improvement. The relationship between TA and evaluation is an iterative cycle; TA is a *source* of data to determine how well schools are implementing community school practices and evaluation data informs subsequent TA priorities. This synergy not only ensures that community schools are ready for outcome evaluation, but it also helps schools better understand why their desired outcomes are or are not being achieved.

A systems evaluation is necessary to support efforts that address complex problems of poverty and income inequality, education and health disparities, and racism and discrimination. The evaluation plan is a systems approach rooted in sound theories that employ a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods that are culturally appropriate, grounded in equity, and will support authentic community and youth engagement and empowerment. This is the context for community schools and the approach will ensure that the evaluation plan is adaptable, replicable, and scalable at all levels from community school, pipeline, local education agencies, and the statewide system to be built and supported by NM PED.

The evaluation design seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What standards and structures constitute a formalized definition of community schools across the state?
2. How is the community school strategy being adopted and implemented at each school?
3. How are key stakeholders at all levels experiencing the implementation and effects of the initiative?
4. How has the project impacted or achieved longer-term outcomes?

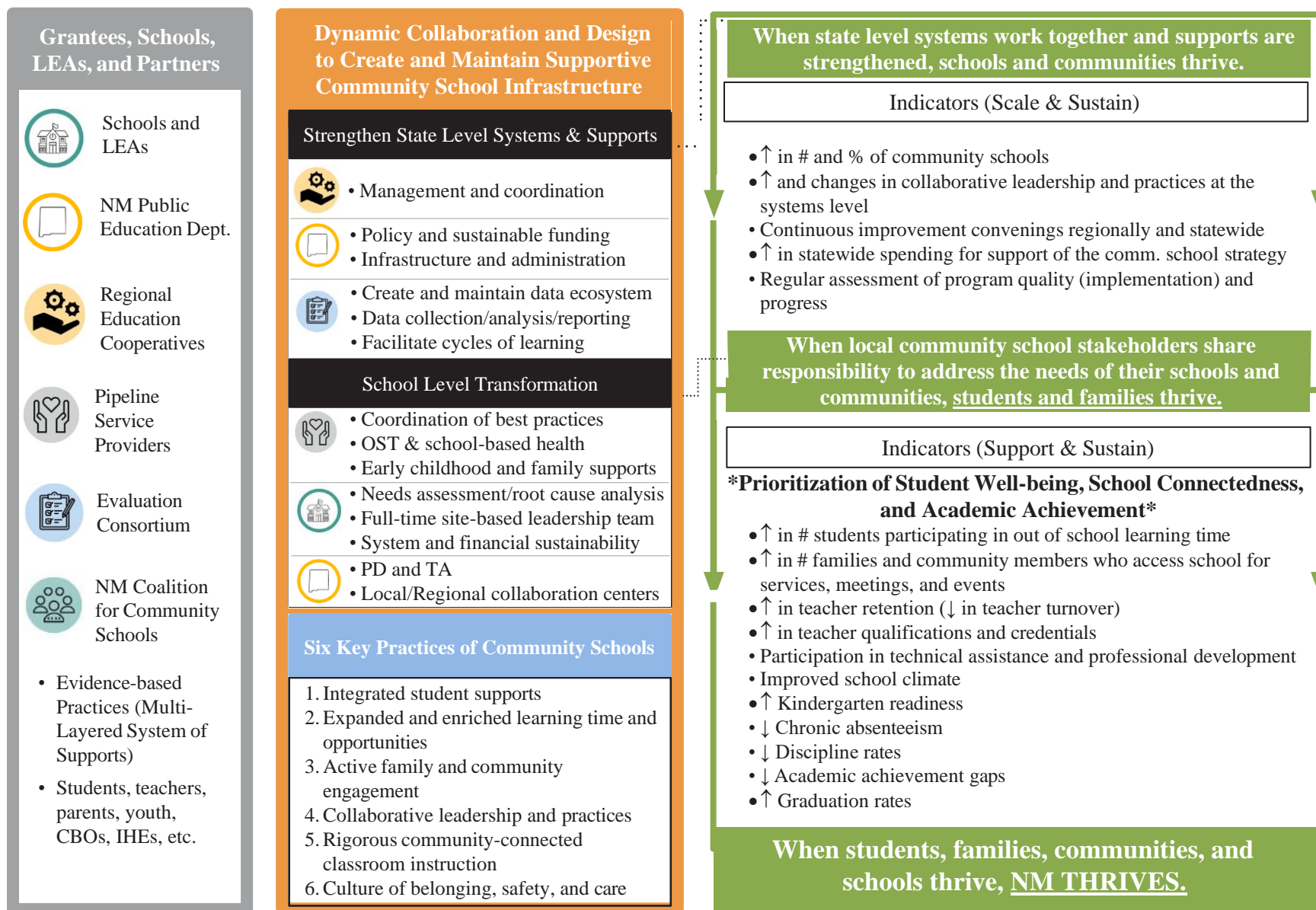
LPI suggested that NM “Establish a **system of regional supports** to offer TA and professional development to help districts implement community schools and expanded learning effectively, including tribal collaboration where appropriate.”⁴ **Local, regional TA** will work in tandem with the evaluation learning partners, collecting needed data and making support and professional development adjustments based on evaluation reports for each community school. This TA team, or Community Schools Quality Management Coordinators (QMCs), will serve in five regions across NM: Southwest, Southeast, Central, Northeast, Northwest. These QMCs will provide in-person, hands-on support for community school practitioners, including CS Coordinators and Site-based Leadership Teams. This data and outcomes-driven support is essential for whole school transformation and the implementation of the 6 Key Practices of Community Schools. The QMCs will work closely with regional pipeline service providers, providing vital equitable support and resources for rural areas of NM.

The logic model on the following page summarizes key inputs including the six key practices, TA, and evaluation as well as short and longer-term indicators to assess progress toward outcomes. The community school strategy, fidelity of implementation to the strategy, technical assistance and evaluation create an essential ecosystem of support for communities and students to thrive. The promising data outcomes that address the *Martinez Yazzie Consolidated Lawsuit* and the improved academic scores and graduation rates in community schools compared to non-community schools merit thoughtful investment and support from the NM State Legislature.

New Mexico Community Schools Rising Preliminary Logic Model

Inputs and Activities

Outcomes and Impact



TERMS KEY:

LEAs: Local Educational Agency

IHEs: Inside Higher Education

PD: Professional development

CBOs: Community-Based Organizations

OST: Out-of-School Time

TA: Technical Assistance