



# OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE



NEA-NM LEGISLATIVE & POLICY PRIORITIES 2024

# OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

LETTER FROM NEA-NM PRESIDENT  
MARY PARR-SANCHEZ

## DEAR NEA-NM SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS,

**2023 was another year of significant progress for New Mexico educators, students, and schools.** NEA-NM and our allies have been leading a movement to end the educator shortage and ensure our students have equitable access to the high-quality education they deserve. As a result, our state has become a national leader in adopting progressive education policy. The bills we helped to pass during last year's legislative session move us even closer to our goal of becoming a state that values the work of educators and lowers the structural barriers to learning affecting marginalized students.

Beyond progressive education policy, too, there have been other promising legislative moves in the past year, including increases to the Child Tax Credit and limits to capital gains deductions, protections for reproductive and gender-affirming health care, and common-sense gun control. While it will undoubtedly take us a long time to dig ourselves out of the hole we have been dug into by past policymakers, it seems that our state is finally on track to creating long-lasting positive change.

On the other hand, it is important to be candid about where we fell short this year. Our 80/20 campaign and subsequent ambitious effort to have educators' health care premiums *fully* covered by districts failed to reach the Governor's desk. Despite this, we did manage to increase the coverage amount for the lowest earning educators offering some short-term respite to educators struggling to pay their health bills. Our efforts to reduce the burden of health care costs on educators will continue into 2024. Roadblocks on our path are by no means permanent, and we will keep fighting year after year until New Mexico is a national leader in fair educator compensation and just and equitable schools for all.

**IN SOLIDARITY,**



**Mary Parr-Sanchez**  
President, NEA-NM

# OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

NEA-NM  
LEGISLATIVE & POLICY  
PRIORITIES 2024



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

For over 135 years, the National Education Association of New Mexico has promoted and advanced the education profession, protected the rights and interests of our members, and championed an adequately funded and equitable public education system for all.

### Our Commitments:

- 1) Assure equity and excellence in education** by leading the movement to provide the best possible learning opportunities for every student.
- 2) Maintain vital investments in public education** so that every student in New Mexico has access to a Great Public School and an equitable public education experience.
- 3) Inspire professional excellence among education employees and assure an education workforce of the highest quality** by maintaining culturally sensitive, valid, and performance based standards for preparation, licensure, and employment.
- 4) Protect, improve, and expand the rights and influence of education employees,** and gain greater personal and contractual security, through advocacy processes like exclusive recognition, collective bargaining, political action, and litigation.
- 5) Promote a positive public image of and self-esteem among education employees** to secure a commitment to the intrinsic value of public education.
- 6) Empower education employees through strong local affiliates; visionary, responsive leadership; and inclusionary practices.** Use those tools to increase membership and the personal commitment and involvement of members.
- 7) Promote and defend human and civil rights** by working independently and collaboratively to eliminate all forms of discrimination and attain equitable treatment for all people.
- 8) Support the systems and services that provide the basic framework described in the Strategic Budget** in order to achieve our strategic plan.



# OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

NEA-NM  
LEGISLATIVE & POLICY  
PRIORITIES 2024

## OUR LEGISLATIVE & POLICY WINS IN 2023

### Educator Working Conditions & Student Learning Environment

- **\$4 billion for our public schools**, the largest amount invested in education in the history of our state.
- **\$142 million for the Public School Capital Outlay Fund**, with major appropriations targeting two areas; 1) \$65 million distributed to public school districts for career technical education and prekindergarten facilities and general maintenance, and 2) \$35 million for distribution to public school districts for school security improvements.
- **Increase to the At-Risk factor in the State Equalization Guarantee (SEG)** from .30 to .33, positively impacting schools' operating budgets by approximately \$32 million to address at-risk students' needs.
- **Free school meals to all public and charter school students.**

### Educator Retention

- **6% pay raise** for all public school employees.
- **Increase of the statutory minimum salary for educational assistants** from \$12,000 to \$25,000.
- **80% health care coverage for any education employee making under \$50,000, 70% for educators making between \$50,000 and \$60,000, and maintaining the 60-40 split for all other education employees.**
- **Removal of the cap on district coverage of educator health care costs**, enabling locals to bargain for 100% coverage.

### Vision for the Future

- **\$40 million for career and technical education "innovation zones"**
- **\$2 million increase to funding for Community Schools**, for a total of \$10 million.
- **Convening of a task force to conduct research and issue policy recommendations ensuring the long-term sustainability of Community Schools.**
- **Increase of \$135 million to the Early Childhood Education and Care Department.**

# OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

## LIST OF NEA-NM LEGISLATIVE & POLICY PRIORITIES 2024

### COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

- Fully fund a statewide rollout of the Community Schools strategy for all schools that have more than 50% of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch
- Ensure recurring Community Schools funding is sustainable and that funding amounts scale to match local contexts
- Support the development of the Southwest Institute for Transformational Community Schools (SWIFT) to provide much-needed technical assistance to Community Schools practitioners across the state

### CLASS SIZE

- Support legislation that would place a cap on individual class sizes (instead of obfuscatory class size averages) and restrict use of class size waivers to truly exceptional circumstances
- Create a reporting portal and enforcement mechanism by which breaches of statutory class size limits can be reported and addressed

### PLANNING TIME

- At minimum, double the amount of paid planning time for educators
- Ensure that educators' planning time is uninterrupted and self-directed
- Revise the State Equalization Guarantee funding formula to allocate unit value for increased planning time

### TESTING & INSTRUCTION

- Eliminate (Suspend) the mandate to use Interim Measures of Student Success and Achievement
- Allow whole child measurements, performance based assessments, & capstone projects

### HEALTH CARE

- Increase the state budget to cover a minimum of 80% of public education employees' health care premium costs
- Legislate a funding source to ensure the long-term solvency of the New Mexico Retiree Health Care Authority

### EDUCATOR WAGES

- Ensure that yearly wage increases for educators keep up with inflation and the rising cost of living
- Support legislation to increase the number of support staff including secretaries and custodians and make the \$25,000 minimum salary applicable to those same staff
- Support dual-licensed staff like nurses and social workers in public school funding formula (SEG & TCI)

### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- Convene education stakeholders to support administering the funds allocated for early childhood education by the constitutional amendment passed last year

# OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE STORY COLLECTION



**TELL US YOUR STORY ABOUT COMMUNITY  
SCHOOLS OR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION!**



# COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



Most New Mexico schools and classrooms are not set up to ensure educators can meet the needs of students and families. Many communities are struggling from historic marginalization, families often feel disconnected from our education system, and many of our students do not have their basic needs met and are struggling with mental and physical health issues. Community Schools are a vehicle for change that offer an opportunity for educators to get what they need for their classrooms. We need sustainable recurring funding to make the community school strategy accessible to all schools in our state and a core and permanent part of how our schools operate.

## BACKGROUND

The Community School strategy is “a research-based strategy for mitigating the educational disadvantages associated with poverty and for improving students’ attendance, behavior, and achievement by making schools the hub of community resources.” New Mexico Community Schools are built on 6 key practices: Powerful Student and Family Voice; Collaborative Leadership, Shared Power, and Voice; Expanded, Culturally-Enriched Learning Opportunities; Rigorous, Community-Connected Classroom Instruction; Culture of Belonging, Safety, and Care; and Integrated Systems of Support. These practices are implemented by a full-time, site-based Community School Coordinator, who identifies the needs and assets in the school community and collaborates with all stakeholders to achieve whole-school transformation.

When well-implemented and fully funded, Community Schools have been shown to “lead to improvement in student and school outcomes and contribute to meeting the educational needs of low-achieving students in high poverty schools.” A cost-benefit study conducted in Community Schools in Albuquerque found a \$7.11 return on investment for every \$1 spent on the cost of a Community School Coordinator. Similar studies in other states have found returns on investment as high as \$15 for every \$1 invested in Community Schools, demonstrating that the strategy is also more cost-effective than many other interventions.

While our state has come some way toward adopting the Community Schools strategy, efforts thus far have not guaranteed the sustainability of the strategy long-term. While funding for the competitive grant system for schools administered by NM PED has increased to \$10 million for FY2024, this still falls far short of the amount needed to ensure that all schools with students whose needs are not being met can implement the strategy. The legislature has also not allocated any funding to ensuring the long-term sustainability of funding for Community School coordinators.

# COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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Despite this, Community Schools in New Mexico have proven their resilience and effectiveness. In the aftermath of the Yazzie/Martinez lawsuit, Community Schools demonstrated how the strategy excels at closing educational opportunity gaps faced by at-risk students, promoting culturally and linguistically responsive practices that meet the need of our state's diverse student body, and re-engaging communities that were alienated from the education system by decades of social and racial injustice. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, too, Community Schools showed themselves to be uniquely poised to respond rapidly to crises by leveraging strong family and community engagement to provide economic, social, and health services to students and families in need.

The New Mexico Coalition for Community Schools is now spearheading an effort to launch the Southwest Institute for Transformational Community Schools (SWIFT), a non-profit entity that would provide technical assistance to all New Mexico Community Schools and promote high-quality implementation of the strategy. This effort requires the support and collaboration of policymakers and state institutions in order to be successful.

Community Schools are widely regarded to be the future of education in New Mexico and across the country – it's time that we invest in that future.

## LEARN MORE

### NEA Community School Resources

#### Sources

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2. <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/community-schools/strategy/>
3. [https://www.communityschools.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/ROI\\_Coordinator.pdf](https://www.communityschools.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/ROI_Coordinator.pdf)
4. [https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Community\\_Schools\\_Effective\\_REPORT.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Community_Schools_Effective_REPORT.pdf)
5. <https://eu.lcsun-news.com/story/news/local/community/2020/07/25/takes-village-community-and-schools-unite-respond-covid-19/5510106002/>



# OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

## ADVOCACY



**WRITE YOUR LEGISLATOR TO DEMAND RELIEF  
AROUND PLANNING TIME & CLASS SIZES!**



# CLASS SIZE



Educators are better able to meet the needs of their students when they can provide more individualized attention with smaller class sizes. In addition to ending the educator staffing crisis that has led to an explosion of oversized and understaffed classes in New Mexico schools, policymakers must also support legislation that would place a cap on individual class sizes (instead of obfuscatory class size averages) and restrict the use of class size waivers to truly exceptional circumstances. A reporting portal and enforcement mechanism must also be enshrined in statute so that breaches of existing class size limits can be addressed.

## BACKGROUND

Current state law sets limits on average class size at 22 students per class for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades; 24 students per class for 4th, 5th, and 6th grades; and 27 students per class for 7th through 12th grades. While current New Mexico Public Education Department data purports to show that New Mexico's class size averages are below statutory requirements, this is only part of the picture. Class size averages, which allow schools to balance out high student numbers in some classes by including far from typical small classes like specials/electives, obfuscate the current explosion in class sizes and do not reflect the experiences of students and teachers in our schools. Beyond this, use and abuse of class size waivers and an overreliance on inexperienced teachers and “permanent substitutes” further complicates the equation. In response, experienced educators are often called on to teach additional classes when no teacher is available, to provide lesson plans for the 600 classrooms that don't have a highly qualified teacher, and to supervise students in the halls, in the cafeteria, and on the playground. This creates stress on educators and students and leads to burn out and exodus from the classroom.

HB 413, a bill which was discussed in the 2023 legislative session and received bipartisan support before fizzling out when an LESC report suggested it would require a significant financial investment in our schools, would have set New Mexico on the path to finally tackling sky-high class sizes. Not only would the bill have put caps on individual class sizes, thereby removing the potential to hide high student numbers behind averages, it also would have set stricter limits for schools serving high-poverty student populations, required the recruitment of educational assistants in all classes with more than 15 students, limited the potential use of class size waivers, and created an online portal for the confidential reporting of violations to statutory class size requirements.

# CLASS SIZE

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Ample research demonstrates that educators and students benefit from the increase of individualized attention that accompanies smaller class sizes. It has been shown that smaller class sizes have positive long-term effects on college and career readiness, health, and economic security, and that these benefits are even more pronounced for ethnic minority students and students from low-income backgrounds.

It is also clear that students learn more at school and do better in life when their schools are fully staffed with high-quality professionals who can give them individualized support, respond to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, support their physical and mental health needs, and inspire joy, creativity, and critical thinking. New Mexico must therefore provide additional funding to recruit and retain educators and education support staff who give students a well-rounded school experience. This, in turn, will reduce overall class sizes, mitigate educator fatigue, improve the quality of student learning, and support the wellbeing of students at school and at home.

## LEARN MORE

### [NEA Class Size Reduction Policy Brief](#)

#### Sources:

1. <https://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/23%20Regular/LESCAnalysis/HB0413.PDF>
2. <https://codes.findlaw.com/nm/chapter-22-public-schools/nm-st-sect-22-10a-20.html>
3. <https://classsizematters.org/research-and-links/#opportunity>

# PLANNING TIME



Educators are professionals and must have paid planning time that is uninterrupted and self-directed. To meet the diverse needs of New Mexico students, we must value educators' out-of-class time, so that they are able to meet with students and parents, analyze student needs, and respond with targeted lesson plans and supports. Educators also need professional learning time where they can work collaboratively, observing one another's classes, planning and learning together, and developing high-quality curricula and best practices.

## BACKGROUND

In 2022, for the sixth year in a row, the Annie E. Casey Foundation ranked New Mexico 50th in the nation for education, and 48th in the nation for overall child well-being. 26% of children in our state live in poverty – one of the highest rates in the country. Child poverty is shown to have long-lasting negative effects on child development and educational outcomes. Furthermore, poverty affects some children more than others. Even in our diverse state, poverty rates are significantly higher for Hispanic (16.8%) and Native American children (28.4%) than for White children (9%). High child poverty for these groups is linked to markedly lower reading and math proficiency, lower graduation rates, and higher prevalence of chronic absenteeism. To meet the varied needs of our state's diverse student body, it is imperative that educators have additional non-teaching time built into their work day to learn about their students, to contact student families, and develop targeted, differentiated lesson plans.

Numerous studies of high-performing education systems across the globe show a link between ample paid non-teaching/planning time and improved educator effectiveness and student success. In these countries, educators spend only 30% to 60% of their total working time delivering instruction, compared to 80% or more in the United States. This means that educators in these countries have adequate time (as much as 25 hours per week) to work with colleagues on preparing and analyzing lessons, developing and evaluating assessments, observing other classrooms, and meeting with students and parents. Collaborative professional learning opportunities like these should be prioritized over training that brings in outside "experts" who may not understand the unique challenges of teaching in New Mexico schools.

# PLANNING TIME



While some effort has been made in recent years to implement professional learning communities and other collaborative professional practice strategies in New Mexico, these efforts often fall short of expectations because they merely add an obligation to educators' already packed schedules. To cultivate a culture of professional learning, we must address the root causes of the teacher shortage and reduce the workload of educators, not just to decrease stress levels and mitigate teacher burnout, but also to create the time and space for continuous improvement and targeted student support. The legislature has tools like the state equalization guarantee distribution which can be used to push districts to increase planning time, by modifying the funding formula to grant units for educator planning time in the same way that units are currently granted for bilingual programs, fine arts programs, etc.

The COVID-19 pandemic further laid bare the need for adequate planning time for educators, especially those working with underserved student populations experiencing poverty, lack of access to technology, and other out-of-school barriers to learning. More must be done to enshrine adequate planning and professional learning time into the law and give educators the time they need to do their jobs successfully.

## LEARN MORE

### NEA Teacher Professional Growth Resources

#### Sources:

1. <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2022kidscountdatabook-2022.pdf>
2. <https://data.census.gov/table?q=S17&g=040XX00US35&d=ACS+1-Year+Estimates+Subject+Tables&tid=ACSST1Y2021.S1702>
3. [https://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=psycd\\_fac](https://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=psycd_fac)
4. <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/accountability/achievement-data/>
5. <https://www.ncsl.org/education/the-time-is-now>
6. <https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/how-high-achieving-countries-develop-great-teachers.pdf>
7. <https://www.ncee.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/BeyondPDWeb.pdf>

# TESTING & INSTRUCTION



For too long, New Mexico students have been subject to a system of standardized assessment that is alienated from day-to-day classroom instruction and more helpful to policymakers than it is to educators, parents, or students. Following the Yazzie/Martinez ruling, our state has the opportunity to transform our approach to assessment to better reflect the multi-dimensionality of teaching and learning and offer all students chances to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. We must embrace diverse assessments that are performance-based, measuring what students *can* do as much as what they *can't* do.

## BACKGROUND

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 changed the face of American public education in an unprecedented and enduring way that we continue to grapple with today. Suddenly, standardization across the country became the ultimate goal, with high-stakes testing and federally-mandated accountability measures touted as the only remedy to "low performance" or "failing" schools. While the Obama-era Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 offered states an opportunity to exercise some flexibility following the one-size-fits-all approach of the NCLB years, most states – including New Mexico – clung to frequent, high-stakes standardized testing as virtually the only means of assessment and so-called "accountability." The results are clear in New Mexico: In many schools, curriculum has narrowed to focus on tested subjects at the expense of a more well-rounded educational experience. Teachers have also lost autonomy in their own classrooms, and are subject to undue pressure to meet testing standards or face unfavorable consequences, thereby worsening the educator shortage plaguing the state.

Test scores, despite providing an incomplete picture of the opportunities and supports offered by a school, are being used as a primary measure of school quality. While standardized test results can be a valuable tool for gathering data on disparities in educational outcomes for students, taken alone, they offer an incomplete picture to policymakers and the public. This incomplete picture goes on to influence education policy and even societal perceptions of educators and public schools and promotes a deficit-based approach to our schools that shrouds all of the learning, growth, and engagement that goes on every day.

As we set to work addressing the numerous ways our state has failed students following the Yazzie/Martinez ruling, we must ask ourselves: what role has assessment had in creating an educational landscape hostile to those "at-risk" students described in the ruling, like Hispanic and Native American students, English language learners, students with disabilities, and students from low-income backgrounds?

# TESTING & INSTRUCTION



NEA-NM has joined with organizations like Future Focused Education in recent years to advocate for changing New Mexico's assessment system by reducing high-stakes, standardized testing and transforming the way we think about and measure student success. This collaboration has come to focus on three major "footholds" in the exploration of a more inclusive, whole-child approach to assessment:

1. **Graduate Profiles** – Community stakeholders help to redefine the desired "attributes of a graduate" that would indicate a successful learning experience and preparedness for the future, creating a more accurate graduate profile than that measured by standardized assessments.
2. **Innovating in Grades and Subjects with Less Required Testing** – To avoid abruptly overhauling the testing regime and disrupting schools that have just become acclimated to current testing requirements, subjects with less required testing (like social studies) can serve as testing grounds for performance-based assessments that allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in innovative ways.
3. **Career and Technical Education (CTE)** – As many CTE programs in the state already use performance tasks to assess progress toward learning skills, they offer a model and an opportunity to pilot innovative approaches to assessment that go beyond math and reading to measure the "soft" skills and technical competencies that help students to succeed in life.

Recent case studies from across the nation, such as the Anaheim Union High School District in Anaheim, California, indicate that transformative approaches to curriculum that incorporate performance-based assessment provide students with an opportunity to do work that has meaning and purpose, prepare students for work that demands independence and self-direction, promote deeper thinking, develop a sense of agency in students, and produce better information to assess achievement and potential. Similar innovative efforts are already underway in New Mexico, but require the support of policymakers and other leaders in education to be successful.

## LEARN MORE

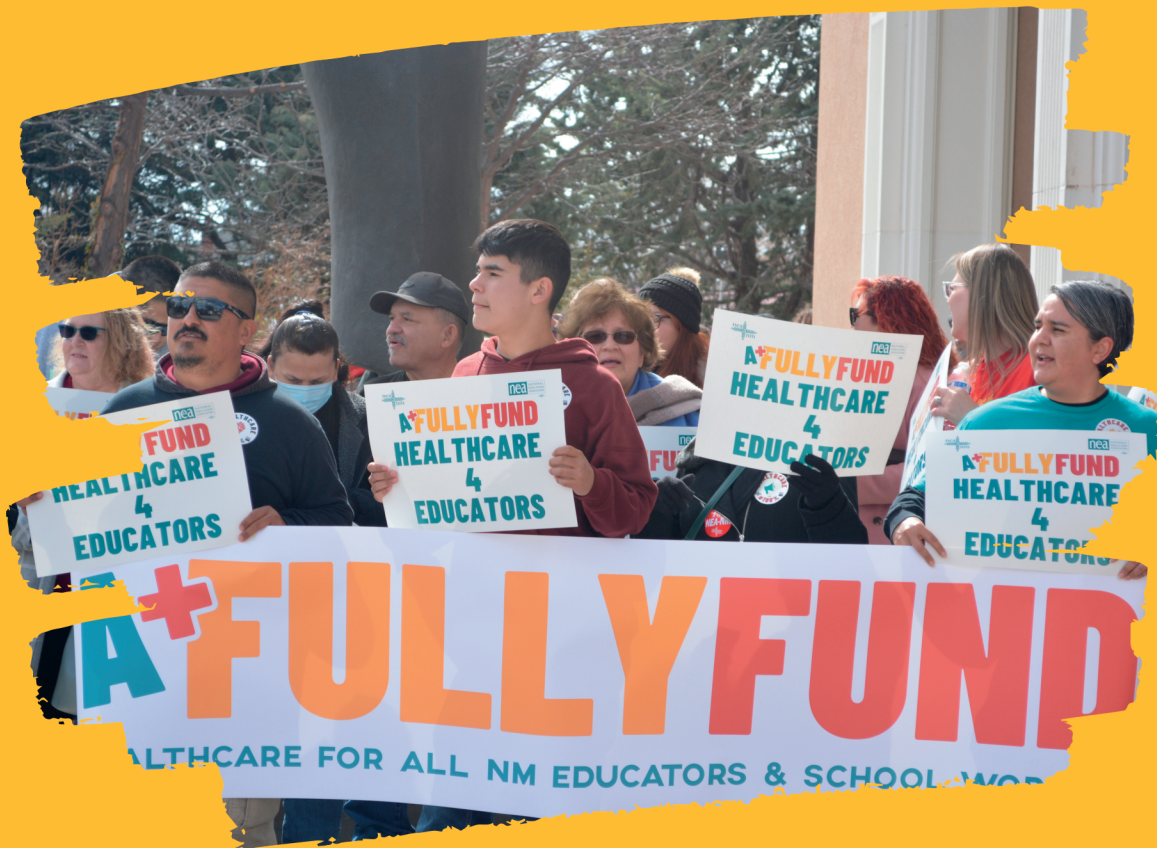
### NEA Standardized Testing and Student Assessment Resources

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2. [centerx.gseis.ucla.edu/leade/publications/breaking-new-ground-with-ca-ssce/](http://centerx.gseis.ucla.edu/leade/publications/breaking-new-ground-with-ca-ssce/)
3. [school-me.simplecast.com/episodes/rethinking-standardized-testing](http://school-me.simplecast.com/episodes/rethinking-standardized-testing)

# OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

## PETITION



**SIGN THE PETITION ON EDUCATOR WAGES &  
HEALTH CARE!**





# HEALTH CARE



NEA-NM continues to fight for the right of every American to access affordable, high-quality health care through a universal single-payer health care system. In the meantime, we call on the legislature to ensure that educators, as state employees and frontline workers who put their health on the line to serve their communities, can afford health care for themselves and their families by increasing the public school budget to cover, at minimum, 80% of educators' health insurance premium costs. The New Mexico Retiree Health Care Authority must also be provided with sufficient funding to maintain the state's commitment to public workers.

## BACKGROUND

Health care has taken on additional importance for many New Mexicans in light of the uncertainty wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Educators, as state employees and frontline workers, put their health on the line daily throughout the pandemic to serve their communities. Despite having gone above and beyond to educate and support students, many educators continue to fear that, faced with rising health insurance premiums, expensive copays, and declining benefits, if they or someone in their family falls ill they will not be able to afford life-saving care.

While recent wage increases for educators in our state are a welcome change after years of stagnation, this increase only goes so far toward making up for the exploding cost of rising health insurance premiums. In recent years, the New Mexico Public Schools Insurance Authority has continued to slash educators' expected real-terms wage gains by hiking insurance premiums. This, together with rapidly inflating prescription drug and health service costs, has resulted in educators paying more out-of-pocket for the same level of care. Educators also pay much more than other public employees – \$3,000 more per year on average – and face vastly differing costs depending on their location – with rural educators paying significantly more for insurance than those in cities.

In her Executive Budget Recommendation for FY2024, Governor Michelle Lujan-Grisham called on the legislature to put \$100 million toward fully covering educators' health insurance costs, a first-of-its kind initiative for New Mexico. This initiative entered the legislature as HB 102, a bill which would have required districts to cover the first \$10,000 of health insurance costs of educators, bringing their average bill to approximately \$4,000 per year.

# HEALTH CARE



Sadly, adequate funding was not appropriated in the budget bill. In place of HB 102, another bill – HB 533 – would pass. While far from fully addressing the excessive insurance burden borne by educators, HB 533 nevertheless offers a short-term reprieve to lower-earning education employees and opens the door for local union affiliates to bargain for coverage by removing the previous cap.

Retired and retiring educators have also struggled to receive adequate coverage under the New Mexico Retiree Health Care Authority. The NMRHCA was not a pre-funded benefits program at its creation. As of June 2022, total liabilities were \$3.5 billion, while assets were \$1.2 billion, for a 33.3% funded ratio. In an effort to cope with lack of funding, the Authority has required retirees be at least 55 years of age and have provided 25 years of service before accessing subsidized health insurance benefits. HB 150, a bill which sought to bolster the program's funding by increasing the payroll deduction for employees and the matching contribution for employers, died in committee in the legislative session.

The critical link between educator mental and physical wellbeing and student outcomes has been well established: when educators are happy and healthy they are better at their jobs, less likely to experience "burnout," and more likely to remain in the education profession. While recent efforts to improve educator wellbeing have largely focused on a teacher's responsibility for self-care, this does not address the root causes of stress and illness in the profession nor acknowledge the role that access to quality preventative care plays in staying well.

## LEARN MORE

### [NEA Health Benefits & Policy Resources](#)

#### Sources

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# EDUCATOR WAGES



NEA-NM asserts the right of all people to earn a living wage, and public school employees are no exception. We need to value and retain the educators we have to end the educator staffing crisis. Ancillary staff, service providers and teachers are ALL highly qualified professionals who deserve recognition – this means not just increasing tier minimums, but also compensating educators for their years of experience.

## BACKGROUND

The 2022 New Mexico Educator Vacancy Report reveals that, despite recent improvements to educator wages and benefits that reduced total vacancies by 34% compared to 2021, there remains a total of 1,344 educator vacancies across the state of New Mexico. These vacancies exist in virtually all subjects, grade levels, and regions of our state – a shortage that is sufficiently acute to be called a crisis. In 2022, during the Omicron wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, New Mexico made national news for calling on the National Guard to cover classrooms as substitute teachers. While this allowed the state to keep some classrooms open in the short-term, it reveals the long-term implications of the unprecedented hemorrhaging of educators from the profession.

The scarcity of qualified educators in New Mexico can be attributed in large part to the lack of competitive compensation for those in the education profession. According to a report published by the Economic Policy Institute, in 2022 (the most recent year for which there is data) public school teachers in the U.S. earned on average about 23.5% less than non-teacher college graduates. Nationally, New Mexico had the tenth highest teacher wage penalty in the country, with public school teachers earning 27.4% less than non-teacher college graduates. While the state's teacher pay penalty is smaller than in years past, when it approached 30% and placed New Mexico in the top three of the ranking for financially penalized teachers, there remains much to do to attract and retain sufficient highly-qualified educators for our public schools.

# EDUCATOR WAGES

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NEA-NM has been overjoyed to bear witness to a turning point in our state's approach to educator compensation. However, the 6-7% wage increases over the last two years and long-demanded increases to tier minimums have merely allowed us to narrowly avoid total catastrophe. Policymakers must continue to raise educator wages at pace with rising living costs in FY2025. Likewise, while raising tier minimums has been an important step in the right direction, it is also critical that we retain and value veteran educators by ensuring compensation commensurate with years of experience.

## LEARN MORE

### [NEA Professional Pay Resources](#)

#### Sources:

1. <https://alliance.nmsu.edu/soar-center/2022-New-Mexico-Educator-Vacancy-Report.pdf>
2. <https://www.npr.org/2022/02/02/1077056059/new-mexico-national-guard-substitute-teachers>
3. <https://www.epi.org/publication/teacher-pay-penalty-2022/>

# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



All students should have access to successful programs that close educational opportunity gaps, including universal pre-K and other early childhood programs that are culturally and linguistically responsive, developmentally appropriate, and inclusive of students with disabilities. NEA-NM supported the constitutional amendment that was adopted early this year to appropriate additional funds from the Land Grant Permanent Fund to early childhood education, K-12 programs for at-risk students, and educator compensation. Now, we want educators to have a voice in how these critical funds will be spent in our schools.

## BACKGROUND

Considerable research attests to the lifelong impact of early childhood education on everything from college graduation rates to health outcomes, and yet 55% of young children (ages 3-4) in New Mexico are not enrolled in school of any kind. In the landmark education equity lawsuit *Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico*, Judge Sarah Singleton ruled that our state has “violated the rights of at-risk students [children who come from economically disadvantaged homes, children who are English Language Learners, children who are Native American, and children with a disability] by failing to provide them with a uniform statewide system of free public schools sufficient for their education,” including by failing to provide them with programs and services such as quality Pre-K, K-3 Plus, extended learning, dual language, culturally and linguistically relevant education, and social services. The New Mexico Funding for Early Childhood Programs Amendment—which went before voters in the November 2022 general election—will play a critical role in addressing the findings of this case, by closing educational opportunity gaps that put students at a disadvantage from an early age, funding K-12 extended learning time opportunities and programs for at-risk students, and ensuring educators are adequately paid.

Now that the amendment has been approved by voters, education stakeholders from across the state, including NEA-NM, should be immediately convened to determine how the newly allocated funds will be administered and to support the growth of the funded programs.

## LEARN MORE

### [NEA Early Childhood Education Resources](#)

#### Sources

1. <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2018/10/16/17928164/early-childhood-education-doesnt-teach-kids-fund-it>
2. <https://assets.aecf.org/m/databook/2021KCDB-profile-NM.pdf>

## EXTENDED LEARNING TIME

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Although HB 130 has mandated ELT across schools, how and when to add the extra instructional hours remains up to districts - creating an opportunity for locals to engage in bargaining.

## HEALTH CARE

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By removing the present cap on districts covering educator health care costs, HB 533 will now allow locals to bargain for up to 100% coverage of their premium costs.

## FEDERAL COVID RELIEF FUNDING

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Until September 30 2023, locals still have the opportunity to influence how ARP ESSER funding is spent in their districts.

## SEG & FAMILY INCOME INDEX FUNDING

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Following the passage of HB 199, increasing the At-Risk factor in the State Equalization Guarantee, and the creation of the Family Income Index, locals will now have an opportunity to bargain with districts about the best use for the incoming funding.

## NEA-NM LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION & BARGAINING POLICY GUIDE



**MELISSA VALENCIA**  
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NEA-NM AWARD FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE  
RECIPIENT 2023

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