

NEA-NM Legislative Platform

Introduction

Since 1885, the National Education Association of New Mexico works to promote and advance the education profession, protect the rights and interests of our members, and secure an adequately funded and equitable public education system for all. Throughout its long history, enacting legislation that reflects the needs and experiences of New Mexico's teachers (educators), students, and communities has been of the utmost importance in achieving these goals.

It is critical that the voice of educators be included in the decision-making and budget processes regarding children's education and care in public schools. These decisions will determine health and safety in the workplace and shape the quality of education New Mexico's students can expect to receive for years to come. The COVID-19 crisis has underlined the stark inequity that continues to plague our public education system, while emphasizing the indispensable role schools and teachers play in our society. The pandemic has provided a unique opportunity to adopt innovative policies and recommit ourselves to public education. We ask that state lawmakers carefully consider the following Legislative Goals, which reflect the collective voice of thousands of educators across the state who are more invested in public education than ever before.

It is important to note that the categorization of this platform into themes is intended to facilitate reading but does not reflect the truly interconnected nature of our work: all of these goals work together synergistically to uplift the education profession and create a more just and equitable education system for students.

NEA-NM looks forward to collaborating with state legislators and the Governor to see these goals realized in the next legislative session and beyond.

Sufficient and Equitable Public Education System

Support Community Schools: Community Schools meet the needs of diverse students and families by including them as full partners in decision-making and allowing them to shape the programs and policies they wish to see implemented in their schools. Community schools identify both the assets and needs in a school community through the hiring of an on-site coordinator who works within the school to bring about grassroots change. Rather than pursued as a below-the-line grant program receiving limited recurring State funding, the Community Schools model should be rolled out Statewide as part of an effective strategy to combat poverty, improve academic learning, and achieve racial and social equity in New Mexico.

Ensure Student Equity and Opportunity: Our education system must be rebuilt on core values of honoring our students' well-being and ending systems of discrimination and marginalization that do not allow all students to learn and perform to their full potential. The State must deeply engage educators, students, families, and tribal leaders to shape education priorities. These priorities should emphasize increasing and maintaining appropriate support for students with priority needs, such as special education, gifted, and English Language Learners, and providing for more fine arts, physical education, music, and vocational programs taught by qualified licensed instructors. *"We therefore work to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals. We recognize the importance of cooperative relationships with other community institutions, especially the home, in fulfilling our obligation to the student."* –NM Code of Ethics.

Dual Language Education: Deep investments must be made in dual language educators who will in turn foster bilingualism, biliteracy, enhanced awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and high levels of academic achievement in two languages. Dual Language education provides a multilingual, multicultural, and rich experience for students. New Mexico's rich linguistic and cultural resources must be developed as assets. Many of NM's students hear a language other than English spoken at home. Research shows that development of a child's native language will help a child learn an additional language at much higher levels of success.

Early Childhood Education: All students should have access to successful programs that increase educational opportunity, including universal pre-K that is culturally and linguistically responsive. In addition, students with disabilities must be provided with special education and ancillary services that meet individualized education plans and in the most appropriate and least restrictive classroom settings. Discipline of young children should be developmentally appropriate, inclusive and to the extent possible restorative (root-cause) in nature. Home visiting programs and other early childhood programs are also proven to help our students be fully ready to benefit from their K-12 schooling and should be expanded Statewide.

Increase Educator Planning Time by Funding additional Staff (counselors, social workers, onsite-coordinators, specials teachers: dual-language, arts, PE, music) teachers: All educators must have additional planning time to navigate the challenges of students living in poverty, students with disabilities and students learning English as a second language. Food insecurity, housing, and transportation insecurity (poverty) cause specific challenges to students. Educators need time to analyze student needs and respond with appropriate supports like collaborating with the school's social worker, counselor, or nurse (on-site coordinator) to establish contacts with community agencies that can expand the school's capacity to provide help for students and families. Educators need time to make home visits and seek to understand the challenges that families and students face in accessing educational opportunities. Educators need time to work with families to understand how their child learns best. Parents are a wealth of information regarding their children, and educators need time to meet and collaborate with them and other educators. Legislatively reduce administrative tasks that have little or nothing to do with teaching or supporting students.

K-12 Home Visits: Research has shown for years that families are essential to student and school success. Cultural and socioeconomic differences, expectations and unconscious assumptions may get in the way or well-meaning adults working together effectively. Home visiting can help educators and families overcome barriers that get in the way of developing deep, trusting relationships that affect a child's academics. Educators should be given training, time, and extra pay to conduct meaningful home visits. Significant barriers to student success can be overcome with a mutually supportive relationship between home and school. The US Department of Education recognizes home visiting as a high impact strategy for family engagement when properly conducted.

Extended Learning: Educators believe in the power of extended learning for our students. Local affiliates, districts, parents, and students must participate fully in the design, authorization, implementation, and evaluation of extended school and year programs. Authentic teacher-generated assessments should be used to measure student academic growth and achievement. Laws and policies governing these programs must take into consideration the impact on the community and be in accordance with professional salaries and class size. These programs must be staffed by properly certified/licensed employees, and/or community partners. Employment in these programs must be on a voluntary basis. We believe the most powerful programs provide funding for classroom supplies, as well as money for experiential learning activities which go beyond textbook and/or computer seat time. Partnership with local nonprofit organizations also typically enhances program quality. Flexibility must be provided as to how individual school districts and individual schools within a district can best meet the needs of their communities, parents, and students.

Every New Mexico Student Will Learn in a Carbon-Neutral School: Develop and initiate funding for a plan to make every New Mexico school carbon-neutral. This program will simultaneously move our State toward increasing the flow of available funds to the classroom (by reducing the structural energy-related "fixed cost" within District and school budgets). This plan should be structured so that contractors work with the school staff to provide student opportunities for Career and Technical Education instruction and hands-on learning experiences for students (such as understanding the math, science, engineering, and policy behind the initiative). This program will also be a big step toward helping our State achieve its goals of being carbon neutral by 2045 and stimulate economic growth in every New Mexico community.

Funding

Prioritize Education Funding to Guarantee Adequate Recurring Revenues: Over the last ten years, public school funding has been reduced as a percent of general fund expenditures. Every dollar spent through the failed strategy of tax breaks for the rich is a dollar taken from our students. Adopt a strategy to provide revenue for sufficient funding to meet student needs for every New Mexico student.

- Repeal the 2013 Corporate Tax Give-Away
- Restore Personal Income Tax Rates of 2003

- Raise Cigarette, Alcohol, and Gas Taxes (Excise Taxes)
- Repeal the Capital Gains Deduction that allows investments to be taxed at a lower rate than the hard-earned wages of New Mexico workers.

Safeguarding School Employee Retirement: Retirement credit is earned compensation—not a "gift" from taxpayers. Provide all education employees with the full benefits of retirement through a fully funded defined benefit plan, with the original COLA's restored, without offsets for other pension plans. The financial security of the New Mexico Educational Retirement Association (ERB) must be ensured through measures supported by the partner groups comprising ERB membership.

Return to Work Educators: Reduce or eliminate Return to Work employees' wait out period and eliminate cap on compensation limit. This will allow retired educators to return immediately to address the educator shortage.

Providing Pay Equity and a Living Wage for All School Employees: Student success is enhanced with a stable, resourced high-quality educational workforce. Provide an appropriate living wage for all school employees, including but not limited to paraeducators, school secretaries and other administrative support staff, food service, transportation, and custodial employees maintenance employees, licensed trades, security officers. Fully fund the statutorily required increases to Statewide Teacher Licensure levels and ensure all experienced teachers at each level are similarly respected by enacting an across-the-board minimal increase that exceed cost of living increases. Add another level of teacher pay for a teacher resident. Enact and fund appropriate licensure level minimum salaries for Education Assistants/paraprofessionals, and other licensed educational professionals.

Legislation to Increase Student Success Must Address Poverty and Quality of Life for Parents and the Community: This should include, but not be limited to, raising the minimum wage to a living wage, universal healthcare, and women's reproductive health freedom. Codify into law the right to reproductive freedom established nearly 50 years ago by the Supreme Court's decision in Roe v. Wade. Family planning and reproductive health decisions should be left to individuals.

Providing Affordable Health Insurance for Education Employees: As with student learning, the quality of teaching is impacted by educator health. Escalating health insurance premiums and benefit decreases impact recruitment and retention of quality educators. Appropriate health care options must be provided. The statutory limit for employer-paid insurance premium subsidies must be funded to maintain a healthy workforce of quality educators. Require Districts to pay more of, or all, the premium cost for health insurance for all employees. Use funds to give a one-time cash infusion to the New Mexico Public Schools Insurance Authority.

Protecting Retiree Health Care: When the New Mexico Retiree Health Care Authority (NMRHCA) was created, it was not a pre-funded retirement benefits program. Provide sufficient funds to maintain the commitment made by New Mexico citizens to public employees. Limited

increases in employee and employer withholdings, funded by the State, to improve the solvency of the system may be required.

Preserving Public Funding: Resist schemes to privatize the education of any public-school students. Privatization of educational services cannot be tolerated, including those supported by the PED through below-the-line programs funneling public funds to private enterprises. Privatization is an abdication of public accountability. We must avoid giving control of students' education to private, for-profit providers and charter "management" corporations—be they delivered on-site or through virtual technology. Place a moratorium on the expansion of charter schools.

Preventing Vouchers, Tax Credits, Public Scholarships or Other Schemes to Privatize Public Schools and Resources: Free and uniform public schools are required by the New Mexico Constitution. Direct all financial support for student education toward fulfillment of this constitutional obligation, and not toward supporting private schools, home schooling, or for-profit management of public schools, including charters. The privatization of any public-school employee positions, whether full-time, part-time, or temporary, must be resisted.

Building Higher Education Funding: Higher Education funding must be fully restored, and no more cuts made. A statutorily defined formula, similar to that in the School Finance Act for Public Schools, should be enacted to provide sufficient funding for Higher Education, holding harmless all institutions during the transition. Funding cannot be allowed for any form of "Merit Pay," but must allow Higher Education to prioritize equitable faculty and staff increases over capital costs.

Adequately Funding Fixed Costs: We advocate funding to provide for built-in fixed costs and for district flexibility so employees and elected school boards, through collective bargaining, may determine local priorities.

Staffing for Student Needs

Student Mental Health Needs: Education Support professionals (ESP) can have profound effects on student learning and are vital to properly address everyday student issues such as physical and mental health problems, homelessness, and all adverse childhood experiences (ACES) Mental health needs are best served when the school community is supported by a team of trained professionals and support staff including licensed School Social Workers, Licensed school Counselors, Licensed School Psychologists, Licensed School Nurses, and Behavioral Support Specialists.

Social Emotional Learning: Social emotional learning is not an add on—it must be embedded into classrooms and school cultures. Honoring the social emotional needs of learners is negated if we try to teach faster so that students try to learn fast to "catch up." Students can better obtain real-life skills, such as critical thinking, when they are supported in the engagement of deep

curricular studies and when schools move away from overly abundant lists of content designed to prepare students for standardized tests.

Health and Wellness Resources that Promote Wellbeing-School based health centers should be increased and available in all schools serving low-income students and families. Poverty creates conditions that affect cognitive and language development and socioemotional skills. Young people in low-income, minority communities are at an increased risk of experiencing or witnessing violence or other traumatic events. Teachers must be prepared with trauma-informed approaches to mitigate the effects of poverty and trauma on learning and healthy development.

Residency Programs to Enhance the Teacher Ecosystem: Research on the impact of a well-developed residency model suggests that, on average, residents are more racially diverse than new teachers; are much more likely to stay in teaching, especially in high-need districts; and are typically more effective than other novice teachers. Teacher residents should be embedded into teacher preparation programs. Paid residencies would attract more educators to enroll in formal preparation programs that better prepare educators to enter their classrooms as the most experienced and well-versed teachers.

Healthy and Safe Schools

We all deserve, without any exceptions, the right to live, work, and thrive no matter our color, immigration status or sexual orientation and gender identities.

Student Safety: The leading cause of death among children and adolescents is gun violence. Increased firearm-related mortality shows that we continue to fail to protect our children from a preventable cause of death. Unequivocally support a state and national ban on the sale and possession of automatic and assault-style (including, but not limited to, AR-15 or AK-47) weapons; and strongly support a universal and uniform system of background checks for all gun sales.

Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth: Educators, parents, students, and communities are uniting across race, gender, and place to demand safe and affirming schools where all our students can learn, grow and thrive. Our LGBTQ+ students need us to ensure our schools are places where all students are protected and empowered.

School Infrastructure:

Working Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) in school buildings and school buses is one of educators' most pressing concerns. Parents are also worried about air quality in their children's schools. A June 2021 Rand survey found that, among parents...ventilation in classrooms was the top-ranked safety concern.

- Quality internet access must be guaranteed for all students.
- Security Systems
- Working plumbing

- Up to date school buildings and facilities that are worthy of our children and staff

Bullying- Anti-bullying must be addressed as part of a school's safety plan for students and staff. We must be able to identify bullying in order to intervene. Once bullying is identified, we can take the necessary actions to stop bullying and prevent it from occurring in the future. Bullying is systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt and/or psychological distress on another. Bullying can be physical, verbal, or social. Bullying is not just child's play, but a frightening experience many students face every day. It can be as direct as teasing, hitting, threatening, destruction of property or forcing someone to do something against their will, or as indirect as in rumors, exclusion, or manipulation. Bullying involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the one who bullies and their target.

Professionalism and Academic Freedom

New Teacher Induction, Mentoring and Residency Programs: Statutorily mandated induction and mentoring programs for public education employees must, finally, be funded. Colleges of education should be funded to collaborate with and provide support for teacher induction and mentoring in public schools. Support for research based, well-developed residency programs to encourage more New Mexicans to enter teaching and the other education professions as the best route to provide every New Mexico student with a highly qualified educator, rather than expanding alternative programs or relying excessively on long-term substitute teachers as the route to address our teacher shortage. New Mexico should develop high quality alternative routes into teaching through residency programs, by providing essential oversight of residents by a master educator, ensuring candidates learn specific educational theories and strategies, while providing the correct coursework for candidates to address the needs of the students they will be assigned to teach.

Address the Educator Shortage: Well-prepared teachers have both content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. New Mexico students will benefit from well-prepared teachers. They will benefit more if we can retain them. Fund increased planning time for educators to be available to mentor new teachers. More support is needed for educators in their first five years.

Class-size Limit: Statutorily prohibit blanket class-size waivers, or class-size averaging that shorts the students time with educators. Large class sizes and the resulting limited one-on-one time with educators have a disproportionate negative impact on English Language Learners and other students with priority needs. Restore funding for sufficient staff, including highly qualified teachers and support service professionals, to adhere to, and meet all students' needs.

Student Assessments: Varied performance assessments conducted in a formative (on-going) manner can be used for diagnosis of student needs and improvement of instruction. Student assessments should never be used for high stakes decisions including school grading or staff evaluations and compensation. Performance based assessment, like Capstone projects, are

more culturally and linguistically appropriate for New Mexico's diverse learners. State mandated assessments should be significantly reduced and used as only one measure of student success. Teacher created assessments, grades based upon day-to-day instruction, dual language acquisition, civic/community engagement, student attendance and other locally created measures provide a more complete student assessment picture. Multiple measures must be used.

Building an Appropriate School Employee Evaluation System: Our students, and the public, deserve an educational workforce accountable to them. Student success is enhanced when evaluation systems emphasize professional growth and development. Fair evaluation systems that appropriately measure teacher impact on student achievement do not use standardized student test scores. Evaluations must be fair and impartial and based on objective observations. Only trained and certified administrators who work together as a team for student success should evaluate school employees, not outside contractors or the Public Education Department. Licensure advancement and evaluation must be fair and transparent and available to all licensed employees, not as a subterfuge for Merit-Pay schemes.

Teaching and Modeling Academic Honesty and Integrity: No matter their color, background, or zip code, students should have an education that imparts honesty about who they are, integrity in how we treat others, and courage to do what's right. Students must never be blocked from learning our shared stories of confronting injustice to build a more perfect union. Educators must have the resources to meet every child's needs with well-trained and supported teachers and a curriculum that helps them reckon with the past and shape the future. "*...protect the educational program against undesirable infringement, and promote academic freedom...*"-- *NM Code of Ethics*

Employee Rights

Due Process and Just Cause: Unjust adverse job actions against any school employee destabilizes the provision of high-quality education for our students. Statutory provisions for due process procedures guarantee just cause for all discipline and program decisions of educational management. Preserve and enhance current rights and extend them to higher education and supervisory employees.

Sustaining Collective Bargaining: Students gain a lifelong love of learning when their educators have a significant role in educational and professional decisions and workplace conditions. The process of elected employee representatives of their choice collectively bargaining with their elected Boards of Education and the administrators who serve them, as provided for under the Public Employee Bargaining Act, must be maintained. So-called "Right to Work" legislation and other efforts to diminish the influence of Unions in the workplace must be opposed.

