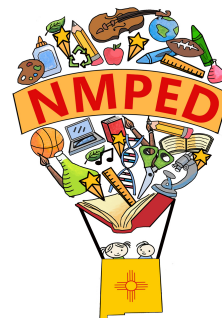


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## NEWS RELEASES

[Home / News Releases](#)**Contact:**

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### NM STUDENTS SEND VIDEO GREETINGS TO ISOLATED SENIORS

### PED TO DELIVER VIDEOS TO NURSING HOMES, ASSISTED LIVING CENTERS

SANTA FE — New Mexico students have created almost 90 video greetings to cheer people in isolation during the

holiday season through a partnership between the Public Education Department and Hobbs High School.

Students from elementary through high school contributed videos in both English and Spanish to the project. They are often joined by teachers, parents and school staff as they sing holiday songs, read stories and perform quick little dances.

All are heartfelt. Some are hilarious.

“It’s real, not edited, and sometimes the kids are messing up. That’s what makes them so endearing,” said Zach Chavez, project lead at the Public Education Department, which helped promote the project with New Mexico teachers and will share the video greetings with nursing homes and assisted living facilities around the state.

“We are thrilled to receive such an overwhelmingly positive response from students,” said Katie Avery, the Public Education Department’s director of strategic outreach. “Now more than ever, we need these expressions of care to help lift the spirits of our communities.”

Hobbs English teachers Alex Salazar, Brooke Richardson and Kristopher Otto came up with the idea as a service project for their students and, through PED, invited teachers throughout New Mexico to participate by having students record a video greeting on a phone, computer or tablet and upload it to a video application common to many educators.

“We are so grateful for the leadership and vision of these educators and the service orientation of our students in spreading a little holiday joy across our state,” Avery said.

Otto said the videos gave students, teachers and staff a much-needed social-emotional outlet after long isolation due to the pandemic.

“During a time that’s been so hard on students and so hard on teachers, it warms my heart to see them singing, happy

and smiling,” Otto said.

There’s still time to participate: The deadline for uploading a video is Friday, Dec. 18. **Detailed instructions on how to participate are available on the Educator Portal on the PED website.**

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Dec. 15, 2020**

## **NEW MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION SECRETARY RYAN STEWART ISSUES STATEMENT ON YAZZIE-MARTINEZ MOTION FILED TODAY**

SANTA FE – New Mexico Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart issued the following statement Tuesday, Dec. 15, regarding a plaintiffs’ filing in the consolidated Yazzie-Martinez lawsuit:

“While it is the policy of the Public Education Department not to discuss pending litigation outside the courtroom, I would like to acknowledge the hard work being done by districts and charter schools, internet service providers, non-profit partners like the **Information Technology Disaster Resource Center**, collective action by the **New Mexico Homework Gap Team** and the Public Education Department to bridge New Mexico’s digital divide. The problem of internet access, so critical for education during this pandemic, is not new to New Mexico and will not be resolved entirely in one year. Nevertheless, with the help of our partners, we have been able to put thousands of digital devices into the hands of New Mexico students who lacked them, and we have expanded internet access and quality of access across the state. This work will continue until every

child has what is needed to succeed academically. That is our commitment.”

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**Dec. 11, 2020**

## **PED, PARTNERS AIM TO LOCATE EVERY DISENGAGED STUDENT**

### ***FOLLOWING MAILING, DIRECT OUTREACH TO BEGIN NEXT WEEK***

SANTA FE — The Public Education Department and 13 New Mexico school districts committed this week to find thousands of New Mexico students who were enrolled last spring but not this fall to make sure they are safe and engaged in learning.

The PED has calculated that more than 12,000 students may be unaccounted for based on attendance data reported to the agency at the end of October. Thirteen school districts account for an overwhelming majority of that number, and superintendents from those districts met virtually Thursday with PED leaders to discuss next steps.

“This is a huge priority across the state and an all-hands-on-deck partnership. We’re going to dive deeply and see how many of them we can find and support,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said.

The superintendents made clear that they were reaching out to disengaged students long before they were required to report the so-called “40th day” attendance figures to the state in late October.

“All of us have done everything we can think of to reach out to these families,” Superintendent Arsenio Romero of

Deming said. “Is there anything else in our toolbox that we haven’t done in the past?”

“We’ve written letters; we’ve called; we’ve knocked on doors,” Superintendent Sue Cleveland from Rio Rancho said.

PED and its partner, the Graduation Alliance, sent letters through the mail last week to every name on the list and began getting responses this week. Early replies indicated some students have enrolled in private schools or Bureau of Indian Education schools; some are being home-schooled, and others have moved out of state.

To obtain better contact information, the Human Services, Children, Youth and Families and Early Childhood Education and Care departments are cross-checking names on PED’s list with their own databases.

HSD’s cross-check turned up about 5,000 matches; CYFD’s cross-check turned up about 4,300 students who had previous contact of some kind with that agency.

The agency partners have divided up the new contact lists and will begin direct outreach to individual families next week with help from the Graduation Alliance.

“Our goal is to understand where these students are living, what they’re doing, whether they need services, and what their plans are for schooling — present and future. If they need assistance re-enrolling, we’ll provide that, too,” said PED Deputy Secretary Katarina Sandoval.

Meanwhile, the superintendents are comparing the PED student list to their own updated enrollment information and discovering that, in many cases, districts have already located many of the disengaged students. For example, PED lists 500 disengaged students in Rio Rancho.

“I can tell you where every child has gone except for 136 of them,” Cleveland said. “We’re down to 136, but that’s still too many.”

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Dec. 11, 2020**

## **STATE ANNOUNCES TEMPORARY SCHOOL CLOSURE AFTER WINTER BREAK**

### ***MEASURE COMBATS COVID CASE SURGE, ACCELERATES RETURN TO SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE IN-PERSON LEARNING***

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) and the Public Education Department (PED) today announced a delay in the return to in-person learning after the winter break, in an effort to help mitigate what may be a post-holiday surge in COVID-19 cases in New Mexico and to minimize the risk of exposure in in-person learning environments during that time.

Details include:

- No in-person learning will be permitted during the weeks of January 4 and January 11, 2021.
- Schools previously operating in the hybrid model may return to their hybrid schedules the week of January 18, 2021. In addition, those operating small-group instruction in the remote stance may also begin welcoming their 5:1 groups of K-3 and Special Education students back to school beginning January 18, 2021.
- All Local Education Authorities must participate in increased surveillance testing following the winter break.
- Surveillance testing will be required for 10% of onsite staff for at least two weeks prior to offering in-person student services.

“Our goal remains unchanged: to save lives and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Today’s actions will help us achieve that goal – and ultimately, help schools and students return to inperson learning more quickly,” said DOH Acting Cabinet Secretary Billy Jimenez. “We are hopeful that with these additional mitigation efforts, we will be able to welcome

many more students back into their classrooms in the New Year. Our children have experienced a school year unlike any other and while we are proud of their resiliency and perseverance, we are eager to see them amongst their peers and thriving back in school,” said Public Education Department Cabinet Secretary Ryan Stewart.

Additional press inquiries should be directed to Judy Robinson, PED Deputy Communications Director, at [judy.robinson@state.nm.us](mailto:judy.robinson@state.nm.us).

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**Dec. 9, 2020**

## **PED PRESENTS \$3.3 BILLION BUDGET REQUEST FOR SCHOOLS**

### ***PLAN WOULD GET MORE MONEY TO KIDS IN NEED, PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY FOR DISTRICTS***

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Public Education Department is requesting a near-flat \$3.3 billion budget for public schools in the next fiscal year while rolling out plans to increase the share going to schools with the greatest need.

“Equity is at the heart of this budget request,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “We’re getting additional money to the kids who need it most while giving districts the flexibility to determine at a local level what their students need.”

Stewart presented the Public School Support budget request to the Legislative Finance Committee on Wednesday. The request includes:

- \$3.17 billion for the State Equalization Guarantee, the funding formula used to distribute money to the state’s 89 school districts;

- \$162 million in funding restricted for specific uses including, for example, transportation, instructional materials and supports for Native American education.

Stewart is also seeking a one-time appropriation of \$56 million from unspent education reform funds — money originally set aside to pay for school reforms like K-5 Plus and Extended Learning Time. If approved by the legislature, that money will be distributed over two years through a new Family Income Index, which will use state tax data to direct support to schools that serve students who are the most economically disadvantaged.

“Current support at the district level will continue, but the new index will allow us to get another \$56 million directly to the schools serving lower-income families,” Stewart said.

“We’re looking to better identify the students who need the most support,” said Timothy Hand, deputy secretary for Policy, Strategy and Accountability.

The K-5 Plus and Extended Learning Time programs, which add hours or days to the academic calendar, were developed to improve academic outcomes for New Mexico children. To date, only 13 districts and two charter schools have opted into K-5 Plus while 79 districts and charter schools offer Extended Learning Time. As an incentive for more districts to opt in, the agency will ask the legislature to provide access to additional funds for community school grants and career and technical education programs for districts that opt into these extended learning opportunities.

Stewart also proposed tapping the Public Education Reform Fund for \$95 million to support pandemic remediation efforts including:

- Counselors and advisors for secondary students on a 1:100 ratio to review transcripts and gather data for targeted credit recovery programs and supports;
- Additional instructional hours for K-2 students, juniors and seniors to remediate lost learning time;



- Transportation services for additional instructional hours;
- Salary matching for work-based learning and paid internships for high school juniors and seniors;
- Two statewide professional development days to help teachers learn accelerated instructional methods;
- Other supportive efforts, including funding to implement the Multi-Layered System of Support, the connective tissue of remediation efforts based on academic and behavior interventions for students.

The budget proposal also includes providing full state funding to districts that receive federal impact aid payments — funding from the federal government used in part to support the education of Native American students. In the past, the state took credit for a percentage of a district's impact aid and reduced state funding accordingly.

"We've heard from our Native American communities how important this funding is to their students, and we want to be responsive to those needs in the upcoming session while ensuring funding for other districts is held harmless," Hand said.

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**Dec. 4, 2020**

## **NM NAMES FINALISTS FOR PRESIDENTIAL TEACHING AWARD**

### ***K-6 MATH AND SCIENCE FINALISTS ANNOUNCED***

SANTA FE —Four educators have been selected to represent New Mexico as state finalists for the 2021 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

The K-6 mathematics finalists are:

- Jacqueline Cook from Albuquerque Public Schools
- Silva Miranda from Clovis Municipal Schools

The K-6 science finalists are:

- Hope Cahill from Santa Fe Public Schools
- Amanda Pacheco-Suazo from Albuquerque Public Schools

State finalists represent the most outstanding teachers New Mexico has to offer and serve as both a model and an inspiration to students and fellow teachers.

Each year, a national committee of prominent mathematicians, scientists, mathematics/science education researchers, district level personnel and classroom teachers recommends up to 108 teachers to receive Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

The committee chooses no more than two teachers—mathematics or science—from each state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Territories as a group (comprising American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands), and schools operated in the United States and overseas by the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA).

The 2021 award winners, who will be announced in August, receive a trip to Washington, D.C., where they attend a series of recognition events and professional development opportunities. They also receive a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation, a presidential certificate, and join an elite cohort of award-winning teachers who can influence state and national STEM teaching.

The 2020 winners from New Mexico were Jessica Esquibel of Albuquerque Public Schools and Melody Hagaman of Las Cruces Public Schools.

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Nov. 24, 2020**

## **PED HIRES NEW DEPUTY CABINET SECRETARY**

### ***VICKIE BANNERMAN, ED.D., TO LEAD IDENTITY, EQUITY & TRANSFORMATION DIVISION***

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Public Education Department has hired a new deputy secretary to head up the Identity, Equity and Transformation division.

Vickie Bannerman steps into the role Dec. 14. She currently serves as principal of Albuquerque Public School's Volcano Vista High School, the state's fifth largest high school. Previously, she was principal at Wilson Middle School in Albuquerque. She serves on the APS Principals' Association executive board and as an Equity Advocate for APS.

At PED, Bannerman will guide the Identity, Equity and Transformation division and direct state policy on the effective implementation of the Charter School Division, Indian Education Division, Language and Culture Division and Special Education Division.

"I couldn't be more honored and thankful to do this kind of purpose-driven work," Bannerman said. "This speaks directly to my spirit."

"We are thrilled to welcome her on board," Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. "As an educational and action-oriented leader, she will fulfill a critical mission of the department of ensuring that a quality education is provided to every child in New Mexico."

In her new role, Bannerman will ensure that appropriate resources are allocated to implement and develop culturally and linguistically relevant and sustaining curricula and

programs. She will also oversee implementation of solutions for the Martinez and Yazzie (Martinez/Yazzie) Consolidated Lawsuit, monitoring progress and coordinating activities and initiatives with other agencies, including the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department.

"I envision schools that are built on foundations of both equity and inclusion filled with diverse populations who see themselves represented in the fabric of the academic culture," Bannerman said.

Bannerman, who is originally from North Carolina, has a doctorate in education from the University of Phoenix in Phoenix, Ariz., a master's degree in supervision and administration from the University of Phoenix and a bachelor's degree from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, N.C.

She succeeds Kara Bobroff, who resigned July 1.

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Nov. 19, 2020**

## **PED SECRETARY ISSUES STATEMENT ON NONCOMPLIANCE REPORTS**

SANTA FE – Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart on Thursday issued the following statement in response to numerous reports of non-compliance with school reentry and COVID-19 safety guidelines:

"We take all of these things very seriously, and we continue to follow up on reports received through the PED's COVID-19 Safety Complaint Portal. Regarding recent inquiries about Gallup McKinley County Schools, we are aware of the concerns about reporting and transparency and have

issued a directive to the district to ensure adherence to PED guidance and rapid response protocols.”

“We also understand that there are ongoing issues with regard to additional employee concerns. We are actively looking into these matters and will take any actions that become necessary to ensure that all health and safety protocols are followed, and that students and staff have a safe working and learning environment.”

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Nov. 19, 2020**

## **PED TO LAUNCH WEEKLY REPORT ON COVID-19 CASES IN SCHOOLS**

### ***DAILY SCHOOL DATA NOW PROVIDED BY ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT***

SANTA FE – Beginning tomorrow, the Public Education Department will issue a weekly summary of New Mexico public schools with two or more Rapid Responses for COVID-19 cases in the previous 14 days in an effort to help families and communities track outbreaks in their schools.

The report will be a summary of data compiled and **reported daily by the state Environment Department**, which issues a Watchlist of schools and businesses with two or more Rapid Responses within 14 days and a Closure List of those with four or more Rapid Responses in 14 days.

The PED’s weekly report, **which will be posted on the department’s website each Friday**, will summarize that data for that week.

“The health and safety of our students and staff remains a paramount concern to the Public Education Department, and staying safe means having the best information available on COVID-19 outbreaks,” PED Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “We think this weekly report will fill a gap in existing information because it will focus expressly on pre-K-12 public schools.”

The weekly report replaces a daily COVID case report that the PED suspended Nov. 1 because the data collection and vetting did not align with what the Department of Health and Environment Department were doing. The daily report indicated, by county, the number of COVID-19 cases among students and staff as reported directly to PED.

With virus cases exploding across the state, the Environment Department last month rolled out a two-step process that focuses on clusters of cases that suggest an outbreak. The process begins by placing a business on a COVID-19 Watchlist if it has two or more rapid responses in a 14-day period. If the number of rapid responses reaches four in a 14-day period, the building, facility or institution must close. Public schools were integrated into the two-step process beginning last week.

The COVID-19 Watchlist is meant to ensure timely and transparent public notification so individuals can make informed decisions about their daily routines and engagements. Additionally, it helps state and local regulatory agencies evaluate whether employers are complying with state public health orders and COVID-safe practices.

A Rapid Response is a series of interventions designed to prevent COVID-19 spread, beginning when the New Mexico Department of Health notifies a child care provider, school, college or university that an employee or student has a confirmed positive case and was on campus/in the facility during the infectious period.

If a public school is required to close because it has four or more Rapid Responses in a 14-day period, it must remain in remote-only learning mode until its county is in the green zone — a Department of Health distinction signifying acceptable control of the virus.

For pre-K-12 schools under PED jurisdiction, only the individual school that reached the four-14 threshold would be required to return to remote learning. That means a school district could have one school closed for in-person learning, another on the Watchlist, and others with no impact.

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Nov. 16, 2020**

## **PED WORKS TO FIND, GET ABSENT STUDENTS BACK IN SCHOOL**

### ***FULL-FORCE EFFORT INVOLVES OTHER STATE AGENCIES, GRADUATION ALLIANCE***

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Public Education Department is working closely with school leaders, agency partners and others in an all-out push to locate more than 12,000 K-12 students who have stopped attending public school amid the pandemic.

The figure is based on preliminary attendance reports that were due to the PED on the 40th day of the fall semester. Typically, attendance numbers are released only after weeks of careful vetting, but because of growing concerns about high absence rates, the department opted to release them now as preliminary, unconfirmed figures.

“While these numbers could change, as they always do, they are still large enough to cause genuine, immediate concern,” PED Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “School attendance is not an option for New Mexico children, even in these challenging times. We owe it to these students and to the future of our state to find them and help them overcome whatever obstacles are preventing them from participating in our education system.”

Preliminary data identified 21,000 students who were enrolled and engaged in learning in the spring semester but are not now. After subtracting those who had officially withdrawn — perhaps to enroll in a private school, move out of state or begin homeschooling — the number dropped to 12,073 K-11 students who are known by name. That is a 4.2 percent decline from spring enrollment numbers.

One district failed to report its 40-day attendance, so the department applied the 4.2 percent figure to that district’s spring enrollment to estimate an additional 136 students likely missing for a new total of 12,209.

A letter will be mailed this week to all those students at their last-known addresses.

“The idea is to invite students and families to come to a web page and answer a few questions to let us know what their current education plan is and to find out if they need additional assistance. If they’re interested in returning to school, we’ll put them with an individual academic coach to get them back on track,” said Rebekah Richards of the Graduate Alliance, the PED’s partner in ENGAGE New Mexico, a program to locate absent students and provide supports to get them back in school and moving forward this school year.

“ENGAGE New Mexico has been a resource for families that are struggling to make school work during these challenging times. For students who have disengaged from school altogether, ENGAGE New Mexico is here to help



provide structure, problem solving and an additional layer of support,” Richards said.

Academic coaches work with students to answer questions, develop plans for success and connect them to community support. Already, 558 of the 12,209 students who may be chronically absent have been referred to ENGAGE New Mexico.

The goal now is to locate and reach out to the others. The PED is beginning by asking superintendents and charter leaders to provide last-known contact information for absent students and cross-referencing the list with databases maintained by the Children, Youth and Families, Human Services and Early Childhood Education and Care departments to provide services like SNAP food benefits or child care support.

Then the list will be divided among the collaborators who will begin outreach to find families and initiate family visits when needed.

The ENGAGE New Mexico program provides critical support for implementation of New Mexico’s Attendance for Success Act, which was passed by the state Legislature in spring 2019. The act sets the expectation that students will attend in-person or remote instructional programs, as provided by their school, each day. It also requires schools to report attendance data to the PED, and then establishes tiers of required interventions for students who are chronically absent. The final intervention is a referral to the Children, Youth and Families Department, which is responsible for investigating educational negligence.

“This is a time for compassion. We know there are many reasons children are not attending school, and we want to work with them and their families to solve problems and get them back in class — not to punish them. But ultimately, we must meet our promise to educate every New Mexico child for college or career,” Stewart said.

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**November 11, 2020**

## **TROOPS TO TEACHERS CONTINUES TO SUPPORT VETERANS TEACHING IN NEW MEXICO**

SANTA FE – To honor the service of New Mexico’s veterans, the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) is highlighting the work of military veterans who have transitioned into our state’s education workforce. The New Mexico Troops to Teachers program is supporting over 250 veterans who are teaching or in the process of transitioning into education as their second career.

New Mexico has utilized Troops to Teachers grant funds to provide career counseling and placement assistance for eligible members of the armed forces wishing to teach in New Mexico’s public schools, BIA schools, and Pueblo schools. Grant money has also been used to provide eligible applicants with stipends of up to \$5000.00 to cover expenses related to gaining teacher certification.

The Troops to Teachers New Mexico program recognizes the importance of relationships with teacher candidates, school district leadership, institutions of higher education and staff at the departments of education and Troops to Teachers program office. These relationships have significantly increased the number of candidate contacts and mentorship to these candidates over the last year.

Troops to Teachers was established in 1994 to assist transitioning service members and veterans in beginning

new careers in public, charter, and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools.

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**Nov. 9, 2020**

## **NM EDUCATORS FIND VIRTUAL TEACHING EASIER WITH NEW CANVAS 'LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM'**

### ***SOFTWARE AUTOMATES THE PAPERWORK OF TEACHING***

SANTA FE — Students in Elsie Espinoza's fifth-grade class in Deming can now open a video to review any lesson or instruction she's given in case they missed it the first time or just need to hear something again.

Espinoza delivers lessons virtually because her school is in the remote learning mode. But now she can videotape those lessons as she gives them and store them on the Canvas learning management system for playback whenever needed.

That's one of Espinoza's favorite features of Canvas, the software suite provided at no cost this fall by New Mexico's Public Education Department to all public schools. To date, 87 districts and charters have adopted Canvas. That translates to 10,116 teachers and 131,587 students.

"Since Canvas provides a lot of space for videos, we can upload every lesson," Espinoza said. "Honestly, I think it's improved learning."

The Public Education Department spent about \$3 million in July to license the Canvas software as a strategy to improve remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Successful remote learning requires more than putting a teacher in front of a camera and kids in front of computers,” PED Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “The whole structure of education has to change, and that requires new digital tools like Canvas. PED is committed to providing these tools during this pandemic when many districts are teaching remotely.”

PED chose Canvas because it gives New Mexico students early exposure to software widely used in colleges and universities.

When schools first closed in the spring due to COVID, many students were not engaging with the paper packets of lessons and assignments teachers were sending home.

“They didn’t have the component of the teacher helping them. With Canvas, they’re doing a lot better,” Espinoza said.

The software suite allows teachers to post videos, organize learning into modules, link modules to assignments, set up discussions and even divide students into groups for collaboration, all while integrating with other digital teaching tools.

In Santa Fe, Julia Morey-Di Ruggiero incorporates a voice recording in the Canvas spelling quizzes she gives her third- and fourth-grade students.

“I give the word, then tell them to write the word. It takes a whole lot less time to give a spelling test than it would in a regular setting. And kids can hit replay and hear it again if they need to,” she said.

As with all new technology, there was a learning curve for users. After offering districts free access to Canvas, PED quickly set up professional development webinars over the summer to bring educators up to speed. In all, PED offered 45 web-based training sessions that reached 1,016 participants.

“Once you get the hang of it it’s pretty easy,” Espinoza said.

Students and parents had to learn to use the software, too. Cheri Reynolds, a third-grade teacher in Deming, said she used the videoconferencing tool Zoom to walk them through it. Today, she said her students log in every morning and watch a pre-lesson. When it’s time, they click on a Zoom button she’s incorporated into her Canvas home page and the live lesson begins. After that, they go to the assignments module and find the assignment they will do to practice the lesson.

“They had to build up their technology skills, but they’ve really done that,” Reynolds said. During one recent group exercise in breakout rooms, she watched students in every group using advanced tools to annotate text and share screens to demonstrate a skill.

“They were doing a great job. It was amazing to watch,” she said. “Most by now have it all down. They’re good.”

It appears Canvas, like other digital technologies that are transforming the learning experience, will have staying power in New Mexico classrooms even after the pandemic.

“Even when we move back into the classroom setting, I’ll continue to use this,” Reynolds said. “The modules, the drop box, the calendar to help them keep track of assignments — these tools are making learning more effective,” she said.

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Nov. 2, 2020**

## **STATE AGENCIES REDUCE DIGITAL DIVIDE FOR STUDENTS**

### ***COMPUTERS, INTERNET HOTSPOTS MAKE REMOTE LEARNING EASIER FOR ALL***

SANTA FE — Two state agencies, working with other public and private collaborators, have significantly reduced the digital divide in New Mexico by extending internet access to thousands of students during the global health crisis.

When schools closed in mid-March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, paper packets of lessons and homework were the only way to reach students in remote parts of the state with no internet access. Other students lived in areas with internet but their families could not afford it.

Seven months later, the Public Education Department, the Department of Information Technology and our collaborators have changed that picture by:

- Providing laptops to thousands of students
- Standing up some 1,250 WiFi hotspots in underserved/unserved communities
- Encouraging internet providers to offer affordable service connections
- Obtaining state and federal funding to close remaining gaps

“We are determined to equip New Mexico’s K-12 students with all the tools they need to succeed, even in the midst of a worldwide pandemic,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “We are leaving no potential funding source untapped, and we will continue to work with our partners in the private sector to strengthen our information technology infrastructure well into the future.”

The Public Education Department, with funding from the NM Indian Education Act, has provided 6,282 Chromebook computers to many of New Mexico’s Indian pueblos and to school children on the Navajo Nation. In addition, New Mexico has gained some 1,250 WiFi hotspots since the pandemic — 550 fixed hotspots plus 700 mobile hotspots on the Navajo Nation. The former were established at no cost to communities by the federal Information Technology Disaster Resource Center (ITDRC), a team of volunteer technology professionals. The latter were funded by PED’s Indian Education division. The nonprofit **Community Learning Network’s** Homework Gap Team **maintains this map** to help New Mexicans find the nearest hotspots.

“Before the pandemic, there were maybe a handful of public hotspots in New Mexico, mostly at libraries. This is an incredible accomplishment,” said John Chadwick, PED’s educational technology coordinator.

The Department of Information Technology has also worked with internet service providers to improve student access. First, DoIT determined what type (2G, 3G, 4G, etc.) of wireless service and which service provider (T-Mobile, Verizon, AT&T, Cellular One, etc.) is available in every New Mexico community. Based on the data, some service providers then stepped up with free or reduced-price offers for students or educators.

“All of the vendors have really stepped up,” Chadwick said.

For example, T-Mobile has offered to provide 12,747 free personal hotspots to students around the state; Kit Carson Electric Cooperative in Taos County is offering free internet

service to all families during the pandemic; Verizon is offering \$20 devices to students, and AT&T has a program that makes teachers eligible for free devices.

“Ensuring students have access to the Internet is the highest priority for DoIT,” said DoIT Cabinet Secretary John Salazar. “It is important that students have what they need, including dependable equipment, and know where to find free hotspot locations in their community.”

Individual districts and charter schools are also investing locally to improve internet access. Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has allocated \$5.75 million from the Governor’s Emergency Educational Relief (GEER) fund for that purpose, and districts and charters themselves have budgeted more than \$40 million in federal CARES Act funding for connectivity and technology needs.

“We’ve all figured out how to make this work by working together,” Chadwick said. “We’re really laying the groundwork for the long term.”

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Oct. 19, 2020**

## **PED-SUPPORTED WORKSHOPS DESIGNED TO HELP PARENTS**

### ***VIRTUAL SESSIONS OFFER STRATEGIES FOR HELPING CHILDREN LEARN AT HOME***

SANTA FE — The Public Education Department urges New Mexico parents to participate in a new series of virtual workshops designed to help them prioritize self-care and support their children in remote learning.



The workshop series was funded by PED and created by CNM Ingenuity, an outreach program of Central New Mexico Community College. The sessions, **described in more detail here**, are open to all New Mexicans at no cost and are available in English and Spanish.

The series consists of three workshops:

- “Survival 101 for Parents As Virtual School Partners” provides insights into the emotional challenges parents and children may be experiencing and provides simple ideas parents can use to build resiliency and support at-home learning. It was prerecorded in both English and Spanish to allow the widest access possible and **is already available here**.
- “Reimagining Parent Engagement Leveraging Virtual Tools” will give parents virtual tools they can use to build communities of parental support. This session will be offered live at 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 22, and again at 3:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 23, in both English and Spanish. **Registration is available here**.
- “Survival 102 for Parents as Virtual Partners” will look ahead to what comes after this semester, helping prepare parents for continued online learning or a mix of class types. This will also be a live remote format, with several sessions in both English and Spanish. Registration for this final workshop, which will be offered from mid-November to early December, has not yet opened.

“Caring for oneself and one’s children has never been more complicated or more critical than during the COVID-19 pandemic. We’re navigating new and unfamiliar territory within remote and hybrid learning stances, and we want our families to know they are not alone. We know family engagement is paramount to supporting students’ success, and we are here to help,” said Katherine Avery, interim director of strategic outreach and community engagement for the PED.

CNM Ingenuity previously provided a series of workshops to help K-12 teachers optimize their virtual learning environments.

“We quickly realized that parents could use help navigating all the recent changes and that they would benefit from a place where they could share the strategies and challenges,” said Erica Volkers-Barreiro, CNM’s Future of Work strategist who organized the workshops.

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Oct. 16, 2020**

## **NM’S 2021 TEACHER OF THE YEAR: ALISA COOPER DE URIBE**

### ***ALBUQUERQUE EDUCATOR WILL REPRESENT NM IN NATIONAL COMPETITION***

ALBUQUERQUE — New Mexico Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart today announced the selection of Alisa Cooper de Uribe, a nine-year veteran of New Mexico International School in Albuquerque, as the state’s 2021 Teacher of the Year.

The award was presented during a virtual ceremony that included students and staff from her school.

“Ms. Cooper de Uribe’s reputation as a friend and mentor to her first-grade students was just one of the qualities that makes her a perfect fit as New Mexico Teacher of the Year,” Stewart said. “Her mission – to imbue students with multilingual skills that will put them on a path to future success – mirrors my goal of excellence in education for all of New Mexico’s students.”

Ryan Flynn, executive director of the New Mexico Oil and Gas Association, the title sponsor for the New Mexico Teacher of the Year program for the second year, also participated in the virtual ceremony. His organization is contributing up to \$25,000 worth of support and professional development opportunities for the winner.

“NMOGA is honored to recognize Alisa Cooper de Uribe as New Mexico’s latest Teacher of the Year. As her colleagues and former students report, she represents the teacher all of us want in our children’s classrooms,” Flynn said.

“Teachers across New Mexico are critical to ensuring that our kids have the best and brightest opportunities ahead of them, and the oil and gas industry is proud to invest more than \$1 billion annually to help support the vital work of preparing and educating our children.”

Cooper de Uribe grew up in Raton, N.M., where she says she first became interested in cultures of the world and learning to speak Spanish. She holds a bachelor of arts degree in English from Abilene Christian University and a master’s degree in Spanish from Middlebury College.

She has been with New Mexico International School for nine years and helped develop its International Baccalaureate Programme of Inquiry for a Spanish immersion school. Before that, Cooper de Uribe taught third grade at The Buckley School in New York.

Her professional association memberships include the International Dyslexia Organization and the New Mexico Organization of Language Educators. She was recently awarded a certificate by the National Hispanic Cultural Center in recognition of a statewide poetry reading competition for students that focused on memorization and performance skills in Spanish.

“I believe teaching should reflect the way we live our lives outside the classroom,” Cooper de Uribe said in her application. “Music, cooking, dance, film, sharing stories with loved ones, and enjoying a good book – many of those

things are fundamental. By bringing that pattern into the classroom, engagement in the learning process increases for everyone, including the teacher,” she said.

The New Mexico Teacher of the Year award was established in 1963. Each year, all New Mexico school districts and charter schools are invited to nominate an outstanding teacher to become New Mexico’s Teacher of the Year and to represent New Mexico in the National Teacher of the Year competition. New Mexico’s Teacher of the Year also acts as the spokesperson for the state’s teaching profession.

The New Mexico Teacher of the Year program incorporates the New Mexico Public Education Department’s vision of a world-class educational system in which all New Mexico students are prepared to succeed in a diverse, and increasingly complex, world.

Media who would like to speak to Ms. Cooper de Uribe and who did not attend today’s briefing may arrange an interview with her through Deborah Martinez, at [deborah.martinez2@state.nm.us](mailto:deborah.martinez2@state.nm.us).

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Oct. 15, 2020**

## **NM TEACHER VACANCY NUMBERS DROP 23% IN TWO YEARS**

### ***MORE EDUCATORS STAYING ON THE JOB***

SANTA FE –New Mexico’s teacher vacancy numbers have dropped for the second straight year as more teachers choose to stay in the classroom now that the education ecosystem has changed to one of respect and support.

New Mexico had 571 teacher vacancies as of Sept. 25 compared to 644 at the same time last year and 740 in September 2018, **according to the 2020 New Mexico Educator Vacancy Report** published Tuesday by the Southwest Outreach Academic Research Evaluation & Policy Center at New Mexico State University.

That is an improvement of 11 percent since last year and 23 percent since the 2018 study.

The study also found that enrollment in and graduation from higher education teacher education programs has increased, which means more future teachers are in the pipeline.

In both her 2019 and 2020 executive budget recommendation, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham moved aggressively to rebuild educator support systems, rapidly increase educator pay and improve recruitment and retention. Those measures and others were designed to address the state's teacher shortage.

"New Mexico educators are the finest in the entire country," Gov. Lujan Grisham said. "They are tireless advocates for their students, for their communities and indeed for our state. There is no question this is a challenging environment for educators and school communities – perhaps the most challenging of our lifetimes. But educators step up. They give their all for their students. And I'm grateful to them every single day – and I will never, ever stop fighting to make New Mexico the greatest state in the country to be an educator."

One of the first and most significant changes the governor spearheaded was doing away with the high-stakes standardized exam used to evaluate both teachers and students. The new teacher evaluation system, Elevate NM, which is being rolled out this year, is designed to support teachers and keep them on a path toward improvement.

Those changes and others renewed a sense of respect and appreciation for the teaching profession in New Mexico.

“The people who are drawn into teaching are people who care about making a difference. This administration has worked hard to tell them we appreciate them and we want to reward them for helping New Mexico’s children succeed,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said.

“We’ve given teachers a much friendlier environment to work in, and that’s paying off,” said Gwen Perea Warniment, the Public Education Department’s deputy secretary for teaching, learning and assessment. “We’ve moved away from high-stakes assessments, and we’re investing in professional development for educators. We want to take care of our educators,” she said.

In addition to hiring and keeping talented teachers, New Mexico is cultivating new ones. The Teacher Affordability Act provides scholarships to help college education majors complete degrees of study and become teachers. The Grow Your Own Teachers Act provides scholarships and leave time to complete coursework and student teaching requirements for educational assistants to help ease their path to licensed teachers.

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Oct. 14, 2020**

## **PED HIRES ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF INDIAN EDUCATION**

### ***LASHAWNA TSO TO LEAD INDIAN EDUCATION DIVISION***

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Public Education Department has hired a new assistant secretary of Indian education.

Lashawna Tso begins the position this week. She served most recently as legislative chief of staff in the Navajo Nation Office of the Speaker, where she supported policy development and reviewed intergovernmental issues.

At PED, Tso will lead the Indian Education division, which directs state policy on effective implementation of the Indian Education Act, including significant and meaningful collaboration and communication with Native communities and leaders.

Specifically, she will work with PED Secretary Ryan Stewart, tribal leaders, Native American students and other stakeholders to ensure that Native American students are provided a culturally and linguistically responsive education that prepares them for college, career and service to their community.

“There were many fine candidates for this position, and it was a hard process, but we know we found the best candidate for the job, and we’re thrilled to welcome her aboard,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “The assistant secretary for Indian education is essential in helping the Public Education Department serve our Native American population with a quality education that is culturally and linguistically relevant.”

New Mexico is home to 23 federally recognized tribes, and Native Americans make up roughly 10 percent of the population.

The New Mexico Indian Education Act, passed in 2003, requires the assistant secretary for Indian education to ensure resources are allocated to develop and implement culturally relevant curriculum and programs; establish and support the Indian Education Advisory Council; ensure school districts and charter schools are engaging in tribal

consultation; and seek funds to implement a plan to increase tribal teachers and school leaders.

Tso also will oversee implementation of solutions for the Martinez and Yazzie (Martinez/Yazzie) Consolidated Lawsuit, monitoring progress and coordinating activities and initiatives with other agencies, including the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department.

“Ms. Tso will be an incredible asset to the Public Education Department,” Indian Affairs Department Secretary Lynn Trujillo said. “Her work on behalf of native families has helped prepare her to be an effective leader for New Mexico’s students and parents.”

Tso has a master’s degree in public administration from Grand Canyon University and a bachelor’s degree from Arizona State.

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Oct. 9, 2020**

**En español**

## **STATE AGENCIES COLLABORATE TO LOCATE, ENGAGE STUDENTS**

### ***SOME STUDENTS ARE NOT ON SCHOOL ROSTERS, OTHERS ARE CHRONICALLY ABSENT***

SANTA FE — Three state agencies are joining forces with local school districts and charter schools to track down students who have dropped off school rosters or who are chronically absent from remote classes.

The Public Education Department is partnering with the Children, Youth and Families and Indian Affairs departments to identify, locate, contact and intervene to get students back in school to ensure their safety and to provide for their continued learning opportunities and wellbeing.

“This has been an impossibly difficult year for all of us, no doubt about it,” Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said. “The only thing that could make it tougher is an educational setback for a child, or a risk to their safety or well-being, that could’ve been avoided. The state of New Mexico is committed, first and foremost, to the welfare of its children.”

“School attendance is not optional, even amid a global pandemic,” PED Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “The whole machinery of state government is working to ensure that New Mexico children are enrolled, engaged and learning.”

School attendance data, which identify students who are chronically absent, are not reported to PED until the 40th day of the academic year, which is next week. But anecdotal reports from some districts suggest high absenteeism among remote learners.

Districts and charter schools determine for themselves what constitutes attendance in the remote learning mode — whether it is being present for an online lesson, checking in by email or some other method.

“We know many districts and charters have put systems in place to identify and support disengaged students, but there are still far too many gaps and needs,” Stewart said. “We are putting all resources at our disposal toward connecting students with adequate internet and providing disengaged students with academic coaching or social and emotional supports. While we continue to hope that additional federal resources for schools will be forthcoming, we’re prepared to support our students with the full range of state resources available,” he said.

Enrollment is also a concern. The department previously had no way to count or track students who are simply dropped from a school’s roster after 10 consecutive days of absence.

“These are the students we’re most concerned about because we don’t have information on their learning or, more importantly, on their well-being during the pandemic,” Stewart said. “We’re standing up a new, parallel reporting process now that will collect that data, along with new partnerships with CYFD and IAD to quickly mobilize to support these students,” Stewart said.

“The Indian Affairs Department is working in collaboration with our sister agencies to ensure that tribal communities have access to the resources they need to get children connected and engaged,” Secretary Lynn Trujillo said. “Our department will work with tribal leaders and tribal education directors to identify, locate and provide support to get students back in school as well as assistance to their families.”

Once the agencies have identified the missing students, the PED and CYFD will contact families to determine if their students are enrolled in private school, being home-schooled or need an intervention to return them to the classroom. More than 13,000 students are being homeschooled this fall, about 5,000 more than last year.

CYFD also responds to phoned-in reports of educational neglect. When the agency’s screening process determines a case does not meet the threshold for abuse or neglect, it is referred to Family Resource Connection Lite, a team of workers who reach out to families to find out what services and supports they need to get their children to school. To date, this program has connected with approximately 200 families. An additional 71 families with existing relationships with the department have been contacted by their field workers for support.

This non-punitive approach focuses on child well-being and connects families with resources and schools, Secretary Brian Blalock said.

“The pandemic has forced thousands of New Mexico families and educators to adjust to changing conditions quickly, and we’re responding on many levels to help support families during this uncertain and often frustrating time,” Blalock said. “We encourage anyone in need of assistance getting their children connected to their schooling to call our Statewide Central Intake at 855-333-SAFE or #SAFE from a cell phone or reach out directly to your child’s school for assistance.”

CYFD is also capitalizing on longstanding relationships with school districts and law enforcement agencies across the state — for example, by assigning liaisons to specific schools to give them a single point of contact to report concerns of truancy or educational neglect.

Teachers — along with doctors, police, social workers and other professionals who come in contact with children — are required by law to report suspected child abuse, and when schools first closed to in-person learning in the spring, CYFD saw a dip in those reports. However, the volume of reports has since returned to normal, beginning in June.

CYFD's Workforce Development Division has created an **instructional video** to help educators and social workers identify potential signs of abuse or neglect through a virtual learning environment.

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Oct. 7, 2020**

## **PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OFFERS TEACHER SCHOLARSHIP**

### ***PROGRAM TO OFFSET COSTS OF SEEKING NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION***

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Public Education Department for the first time is offering scholarships to help public school educators obtain national certification if they so desire.

The National Board Certification Scholarships, authorized in legislation (HB102) signed by Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham last spring, will cover the cost of applying for the voluntary,

advanced teaching credential that goes beyond state licensure. The Legislature appropriated \$500,000 for 2021 scholarships.

The certification program sets national standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do across four components: content knowledge; differentiation in instruction; teaching practices and working environment, and effective and reflective practitioner.

The rigorous process costs teachers almost \$2,000: a \$75 registration fee followed by fees of \$475 for each of the four components.

“When a New Mexico teacher earns this distinguished credential, our children, our communities and our state benefit,” PED Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “Becoming a National Board Certified teacher is a huge amount of work. We can’t do that work for them, but we can and we are eliminating the burden of cost.”

Students who have a National Board Certified Teacher make learning gains equivalent to an extra month in school, according to **the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards**.

They also outperform other students on achievement tests, and the positive effect is even greater among minority students, according to that research.

Teachers benefit from the credential as well. They can move to a higher (Level 3) licensure level without having to complete a dossier or a master’s degree. They also receive a salary differential of about \$6,800 approved by the New Mexico Legislature.

The scholarship application, **available here**, must be submitted before Jan. 15. So far, 25 teachers have applied. An evaluation committee is reviewing applications in the order in which they are received and will notify all applicants whether they have received funding.

To apply, educators must meet these qualifications:

- Be a New Mexico resident;
- Hold a valid Level 2 or higher New Mexico teaching license;
- Be currently teaching in a New Mexico public school or public charter school;
- Submit a reference letter from your school principal along with your application;
- Submit a completed application to the Public Education Department.

As of 2019, 1,276 New Mexico teachers had earned National Board Certification since 1995. Those teachers are members of the **NM National Board Certified Teachers Network**, which will hold its annual conference, virtually this year, on Oct. 23-24. **Registration, which is open to all educators, is available here.**

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Oct. 6, 2020**

## **PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES FOUR NM TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALISTS**

SANTA FE – New Mexico Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart today announced four finalists for 2021 New Mexico Teacher of the Year:

- Alicia Cooper de Uribe, a first-grade bilingual education teacher at NM International School, an Albuquerque Public Schools charter school;
- Christina Herrera-Furst, a humanities teacher at Amy Biehl High School in Albuquerque;
- Suzanne K. Holman, a French and English teacher at Farmington High School;

- Tasha Vasquez, a fifth-grade teacher at Solare Collegiate Charter School, a state charter school in Albuquerque.

Each year since the program began in 1963, New Mexico's 89 school districts and state charter schools have been invited to nominate outstanding teachers to become New Mexico's Teacher of the Year, representing our state in the National Teacher of the Year competition. Those nominated must then complete an application. Selection is based on both classroom performance and strength of application, including letters of recommendation from their school community.

Applications are then reviewed and scored by a selection committee consisting of education leaders from across the state. The top four have now been referred to Secretary Stewart, who will make the final selection.

"I have a difficult decision ahead of me," Secretary Stewart said. "I have no doubt that each of these candidates would do a wonderful job representing New Mexico as Teacher of the Year."

The New Mexico Oil and Gas Association (NMOGA) is the title sponsor for the New Mexico Teacher of the Year program for the second year.

Mandi Torres, a third-grade teacher at Placitas Elementary School, is the 2020 NM Teacher of the Year.

"My tenure as Teacher of the Year has been an enriching experience that has helped me to grow professionally, as a leader and as a human being," Torres said. "Representing teachers across New Mexico has only strengthened my resolve to uplift my profession and advocate for an education system that can be transformed to meet the needs of all students, especially our most vulnerable."

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Oct. 5, 2020**

## **IS MY SCHOOL OPEN? GET THAT INFORMATION EASILY NOW**

### ***PED ADDS QUICK DATA ACCESS TO WEBSITE***

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Public Education Department is offering families a quick, easy way to check on the reentry status of any of the state's public schools amid the uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Is my school in remote learning mode? Are small groups allowed? Have we moved into hybrid mode? Those questions can be answered at this new data portal on the home page of PED's website: <https://rb.gy/29qat3>

The data is organized alphabetically by school district. Every school within a district is listed as "remote," "small groups," "hybrid" or "full."

- "Remote" means schools are operating only through distance-learning. Students and staff are not expected to come into the building (unless staff is performing an essential, in-person duty).
- "Small Groups" means a school is mostly in remote but bringing in either K-3rd graders or special education students of all ages for small-group instruction, adhering to a 5:1 student-to-staff ratio and maintaining social distancing.
- "Hybrid" indicates a school is operating at 50 percent capacity by alternating student cohorts between studying remotely and coming to school for in-person learning. Families that select online-only options may continue their child's distance learning during the hybrid stance.
- "Full" indicates a school is in a low enrollment "micro-district" that has been approved to transition to in-



person learning by maintaining small-group ratios and social distancing.

A separate column lists the county where the school is located and is color-coded from red to green to indicate that county's status on the **New Mexico Department of Health's map** showing COVID-19 spread.

The data will be updated regularly as school boards and other local governing bodies make decisions about their reentry status, or in the event that a school already in hybrid must move back to remote or small groups because of virus spread.

"The 2020 school year opened with a patchwork of education options, and parents, families and communities are understandably hungry for information about the status of their children's schools," said Katherine Avery, interim director of strategic outreach at the PED.

"Obviously, the Public Education Department has never collected this kind of data before but now that we've got it, we want to share it in the easiest format possible," Avery said.

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Sept. 30, 2020**

## **PED WINS \$10M GRANT FOR STUDENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Public Education Department has received a five-year federal grant worth nearly \$10 million to improve access to school-based mental health services.

The funds will be used to increase the number of behavioral health service providers in selected school districts and charter schools, with selection based on family income, substance abuse rates, student suicide rates and student-provider ratios.

“This is wonderful news for New Mexico public schools and for the children who desperately need these services, particularly in this time of pandemic fears and isolation stress,” said PED Secretary Ryan Stewart. “This helps us meet an absolutely critical need as we strive to address the social-emotional well being of our children.”

To improve retention, the proposal includes stipends and increased pay for providers working in the identified districts and schools, with a priority given to rural areas and those serving predominantly Native American populations.

The grant proposal was a collaboration between the Public Education Department and the Department of Health’s Office of School and Adolescent Health.

Success of the program will be measured both by number and retention rate of behavioral health care providers in schools and by responses from students to the NM Risk and Resiliency Survey administered in the fall of odd-numbered years.

The Public Education Department will collaborate with the selected districts and charters to coordinate recruitment and retention work and with Native American communities to support those students and communities.

In addition, the department will work closely with New Mexico’s five largest universities to channel provider trainees to the places where they are needed.

The grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s School-Based Mental Health Grant program totals \$2.4 million a year.

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Sept. 30, 2020**

## **NEW MEXICO EXTENDS SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP TO GET STUDENTS GET BACK ON TRACK AFTER EDUCATION INTERRUPTION**

SANTA FE — A statewide program to help New Mexicans navigate the challenges of education during the global health emergency will be extended after spring results demonstrated significant success in supporting K-12 students across the state.

Participants in the ENGAGE New Mexico program are connected to a personal academic coach to help the students develop plans for success in challenging times, answer questions about technology and curriculum, and connect students to community support.

“We knew that for many students and their families, going from a structured classroom setting to learning from home was going to be a very big challenge,” said Gwen Perea Warniment, the state’s deputy secretary of teaching, learning and assessment. “It makes perfect sense that some families needed help during this transition and, with the extension of this program, we are excited to be able to provide this help to anyone who needs it.”

The ENGAGE New Mexico program is a partnership between New Mexico’s Public Education Department and Graduation Alliance, an organization that provides academic and social-emotional support to help create

equitable learning experiences for students who might otherwise struggle in school. Perea Warniment noted that the students who were provided with this support in the spring were significantly more likely to succeed after schools were rapidly closed during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The program's continuation provides critical support for the implementation of New Mexico's Attendance for Success Act, which was passed by the state Legislature in the spring of 2019. "There is no way our legislators could have predicted this crisis, but they understood the need for compassionate support for families who are struggling with attendance," said Katarina Sandoval, the state's deputy secretary of academic engagement and student success. "That vision has proven prescient, and we need that sort of compassion now more than ever before."

Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said the program is a good example of the ways in which state resources can be used to support local school districts.

"To meet this moment, schools are having to make radical changes — changes that completely alter what school looks like," Stewart said. "It would be wrong to expect districts to take on this challenge alone."

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said she is pleased that New Mexico has taken a national leadership role in providing this kind of support.

"Our state has made a long-term commitment to close the equity gap and protect our most vulnerable children," she said. "Right now, however, it is important to recognize the fact that this crisis has made many more students vulnerable. We must act in a way that will allow us to look back on this time in history with pride, and I believe that is exactly what we are doing with initiatives such as this."

Any family looking for additional support for their students during this school year can sign up directly at

<https://ParentsNM.GraduationAlliance.com>.

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Sept. 28, 2020**

**Read this news release in Spanish**

## **243,661 NM CHILDREN TO GET EXTENDED P-EBT BENEFITS**

### ***STATE TO ISSUE \$45.25 MILLION FOR BENEFITS THROUGH SEPT. 30***

SANTA FE – New Mexico families will receive more than \$45 million in additional food benefits – enough to feed almost 244,000 vulnerable children – following federal approval of the state’s amended Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer Program for August and September.

“The Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer program is an important way to ensure that children will get the nutrition they need, especially when students are studying remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said New Mexico Human Services Sec. David R. Scrase, M.D. “We are working hard with the Public Education Department to get these benefits out to families as quickly as possible.”

The benefit will be added to existing P-EBT cards for about two-thirds of recipients, and they can expect to see the money in early October. Others who qualify for the new benefit but don’t have an existing P-EBT card will be issued

one with the new benefit, a process that could take several weeks.

The retroactive benefit for an estimated 243,661 children who qualify for free or reduced-price meals is meant to offset meals missed because their schools were in the remote learning mode in August and September. New Mexico households with children who receive free or reduced-price meals will receive benefits of \$5.86 per child per day for the period their individual school site was 100 percent virtual until the day their school site instituted a hybrid model.

“My administration will continue to work as hard as we can to ensure New Mexicans have every available resource during this public health crisis,” said Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. “Food benefits are a lifeline. The state of New Mexico will continue to deliver as much as we can for children and working families all across the state.”

New Mexico’s Human Services and Public Education departments worked closely to identify eligible students and manage and distribute the benefits.

The P-EBT program was authorized by the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act to provide assistance to families with children who are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

This is the second round of benefits for qualifying New Mexico children: The state distributed more than \$104 million in May to families of almost 350,000 children for meals missed from March 16, when schools closed due to the pandemic, until June 19.

The New Mexico Human Services Department and the Public Education Department submitted the request jointly to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and were the only state in the Southwest Region to do so.

Per the USDA guidelines, if qualifying students don’t have access to school meals for five days straight, they are

eligible.

The Human Services Department has two hotlines for individuals to inquire about the status of their P-EBT benefits. The Human Services Department Customer Service Center is 1-800-283-4465 or they can call the P-EBT Hotline at 505-660-4822.

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Sept. 24, 2020**

## **THREE NM SCHOOLS EARN 'BLUE RIBBON' DESIGNATION**

### ***ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN ALBUQUERQUE, SANTA FE AND JARALES HONORED***

SANTA FE — Three New Mexico elementary schools are being honored by the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, which recognizes outstanding schools throughout the nation.

- S.Y. Jackson Elementary in Albuquerque
- Piñon Elementary in Santa Fe
- Gil Sanchez Elementary in Jarales

The Blue Ribbon School designation honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools based on overall academic excellence or progress in closing achievement gaps.

Piñon Elementary Principal Janis Devoti attributed her school's honor to a dedicated staff and committed families in the school of about 520 students.

"It's a staff that has worked together for a long time, and many of our students, their parents also attended our school so they know they were successful here and they're confident in trusting their children to us," Devoti said.

"At a time when we're all in this remote setting, we want families to know that as educators, we're really committed to making students successful," she said.

Gil Sanchez Elementary School Principal Carla Martinez was waiting for her lunch at a drive-in restaurant when she saw the email informing her that her school of 290 students had been chosen.

"I was beside myself," said Martinez, who took over Gil Sanchez Elementary just nine months ago, following the retirement of long-time principal Renee Sanchez, Martinez's mentor.

"She was the first person I called and the one who spearheaded transformation at the school five years ago," Martinez said. "I am so proud of the teachers and staff; they're finally getting the recognition they deserve. This will build morale and remind everybody of why we're here. It's what we do day in and day out for our students."

Gil Sanchez Elementary is the first Belen Consolidated District School to win a Blue Ribbon award, and it comes on the heels of earning a distinguished National Title I award for achievement in math and English language arts scores.

S.Y. Jackson Principal Jack Vermillion also credited staff, students and parents for his school's recognition.

"By working together, we have been able to provide a high quality of education that the students benefit from," he said.

Vermillion, who has been principal at the school for 19 years, said stability also contributes to success at his school.



“We have a stable population of students with the majority being at the school from kindergarten through fifth grade. There is very little turnover of staff, and over 85 percent of our staff members either have their children at the school now or had them attend in the past,” he said. “That shows we are doing something right.”

The three New Mexico schools will receive their awards by mail instead of at the usual annual awards ceremony in Washington, D.C.

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Sept. 22, 2020**

## **NM SCHOOL REOPENING GUIDELINES ECHOED BY CDC**

### ***FEDERAL AGENCY ISSUES LONG-AWAITED GUIDELINES THAT LOOK LIKE OURS***

SANTA FE — The detailed, color-coded guidelines for safe school reopening that New Mexico adopted weeks ago are echoed now in long-awaited federal guidelines from the national Centers for Disease Control.

**The CDC’s Indicators for Dynamic School Decision-Making**, issued Sept. 15, are organized into a table that runs from green (safest) to red (unsafe). The colors are linked to community health factors including test positivity rate, new cases per capita and the ability of schools to implement mitigating strategies like mask-wearing and social distancing.

New Mexico initiated that very strategy weeks earlier, when the Public Education Department linked school reopening to **the Department of Health’s color-coded map** showing

counties in red, yellow or green based on the same disease metrics.

“This indicates that not only are we on the right track, but we’re a model for the country,” PED Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “Education leaders around the country have been asking CDC for such guidance for months now. It’s reassuring that the strategy our top national health experts arrived at so closely mirrors what New Mexico has already implemented,” he said.

PED announced Sept. 3 that for any public school to reopen in the hybrid mode, the state as a whole had to be in the green — indicating it is meeting its so-called gating criteria. The state has remained in the green overall since that time. Additionally, the county in which a district or charter is located also must be in the green; the district/charter must have a PED-approved plan demonstrating its instructional, social-emotional and family engagement processes are documented and established; and it must have safety and support plans in place, including any necessary upgrades to facilities and air filtration.

The CDC’s guidelines urge states to use the same indicators New Mexico requires: the number of new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 14 days; the percentage of positive tests in the last 14 days; and evidence that schools can successfully implement mitigation strategies.

K-12 education leaders and members of Congress have been pressing the CDC since spring for clear guidance on when schools can safely reopen. The federal agency’s Sept. 15 response came weeks after millions of children returned to schools, some in districts with positive rates above 20 percent and without requiring masks.

New Mexico’s progress in slowing the incidence and spread of COVID-19 has continued, with the statewide seven-day rolling average of daily cases at 90 as of Sept. 15, well below the gating criteria **target of 168**. The statewide rate of spread, or r-effective, remains below 1, meaning the virus is

spreading slower and not exponentially. Although the state's COVID-19 hospitalizations remain significantly lower than earlier this summer, the southeast region made up the highest percentage of hospital admissions last week, **according to the state Medical Advisory Team.**

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[judy.robinson@state.nm.us](mailto:judy.robinson@state.nm.us)*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:***Sept. 18, 2020****FOUR NM COUNTIES MEET SCHOOL REOPENING REQUIREMENT*****HEALTH CONDITIONS IMPROVE IN MCKINLEY, HIDALGO, DOÑA ANA AND CURRY COUNTIES***

SANTA FE — Four additional New Mexico counties have now met the required health conditions for schools to reopen in a hybrid mode, according to the state's updated COVID-19 map.

The Department of Health map released Thursday shows McKinley, Hidalgo, Doña Ana and Curry counties have moved into the “green zone” — which indicates an acceptable rate of average daily cases and test positivity. Those four counties were each yellow or red when the previous map was issued two weeks ago.

Schools in these counties are now eligible to bring elementary students back for in-person learning in the hybrid model, assuming they have a PED-approved reentry plan and have the requisite safety supplies, processes and assurances in place.

Even then, districts and charters may decide to remain in the remote-learning mode indefinitely, as many are doing.

Catron County moved from the “green zone” into the “red zone” compared to the previous report. However, in order to maintain consistency of operations, schools that have already reopened in Catron County will not be required to close. The goal is to prevent communities from repeatedly moving back and forth between being open and being closed.

Instead, PED and DOH will continue to closely monitor conditions in the county. Should those worsen to a point where public health officials determine a closure is necessary, schools will be notified and given a window of time in which they can complete an orderly transition back to remote learning.

The DOH updates its **COVID-19 Average Daily Case Rates and Test Positivity Rates by County** every two weeks.

Twenty-five counties were in the green zone on Sept. 3, and since then, about 65 elementary schools with about 12,500 students reopened in the hybrid mode.

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Sept. 15, 2020**

## **PUBLIC EDUCATION NEEDS FULL NM CENSUS COUNT**

### ***WITH DEADLINE LOOMING, STATE IS AT RISK OF AN UNDERCOUNT***

SANTA FE — With time running out, almost 15 percent of New Mexico households have yet to be counted in the 2020 Census, which could cause devastating financial ramifications for public education, school meals, health care

and other services for children and families over the next decade.

Experts estimate that every 1 percent undercount will cost New Mexico \$780 million in our fair share of federal tax dollars, so a 15 percent undercount would result in a loss of almost \$12 billion over the coming decade — that is taxpayer money spent on federal programs that are funded on a per-capita basis.

“Such a loss for a relatively poor state like New Mexico is untenable,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “We’ve been working so hard to improve academic outcomes for all our children, and we’re gaining ground. Imagine the progress we can continue to make between now and 2030 if we receive our fair share of federal funding. Now imagine trying to make progress without adequate access to books or food programs — both of which are supported by federal dollars. There is no possible way to replace that lost revenue. An accurate census is simply critical for New Mexico,” he said.

“Completing your census form is a statement of support for public education and all the other services our children and our families depend on,” Stewart said.

The census process began in March, when census invitations were mailed to U.S. households, offering an opportunity for residents to reply online, by phone or by mail. Just over 56 percent of New Mexico households have responded that way.

To count the remaining population, census workers hired by the Census Bureau must go door-to-door to collect responses from households that haven’t completed their form. But that critical operation was delayed until mid-July due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Then the Trump Administration abruptly moved the census deadline up a month, to Sept. 30, which means just two weeks remain for New Mexicans to be counted.

The accelerated deadline has made it even harder for census workers to reach all of the many remote households in New Mexico, which due to its geography is widely considered the most difficult of the 50 states to count.

The decennial census, required by the U.S. Constitution, determines state and national populations, numbers used to dole out billions of tax dollars for federal programs and to determine representation in Congress or state and local governing bodies.

The census form consists of 10 questions about the age and race of every individual in every household, including infants born on or before April 1, 2020. It takes about 10 minutes to complete, and the information provided is completely confidential.

To respond to the census today, visit **2020Census.gov** or call (844) 330-2020 or (844)468-2020 for Spanish.

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Sept. 15, 2020**

## **SCHOOL AIR FILTRATION SYSTEMS TO BE UPGRADED STATEWIDE**

### ***DISTRICTS THAT OPENED THIS WEEK TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS BY END OF NEXT WEEK***

SANTA FE — Many school buildings across New Mexico will get upgraded air filtration systems in the coming weeks to assure that students return to in-person learning in the safest possible environment, the Public Education Department announced today.

The Public Education Department is working with the Public School Facilities Authority and school leaders across the state to determine what air filters are currently in use in school buildings and how effective they are at removing tiny particles like viruses from the air. Additionally, they will identify the highest-quality air filters compatible with each existing heating and cooling system. Taken together with mask wearing, social distancing, frequent handwashing, and other enhanced safety measures, upgrading filtration systems is yet another commitment the state is making to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus.

Ventilation system upgrades and improvements will increase the delivery of clean air and dilute potential contaminants within each classroom and school facility.

Elementary schools that brought students back this week have been asked to assess their current filters and upgrade them where possible by the end of next week.

Schools and districts planning to open later will have to procure and install recommended filters before beginning classes in the hybrid model, which includes days of both remote and in-class learning each week. The PED will contact those district and charter school leaders next week to launch that process and provide guidance on optimizing filtration systems.

To further augment air flow, occupied New Mexico schools are required to take measures outlined by the national Centers for Disease Control for this purpose, including opening windows, running central air fans constantly, deploying portable fans, especially for windowless rooms, and opening dampers.

“Our knowledge about the novel coronavirus is constantly evolving, and we must keep evolving with it,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “If we’re going to let our precious children and our cherished educators return to in-person learning, we must do everything in our power to keep them as safe as possible. We now know that

upgrading air filtration in buildings is one such thing,” he said.

“Education leaders across New Mexico have been working hard in order to leave no stone unturned in our drive to make school reentry in the hybrid mode as safe as is physically possible,” Stewart said. “We know it’s frustrating to keep adapting in this ever-changing landscape, but we must adapt when the health and lives of students and staff are at stake,” he said.

New Mexico public schools closed to in-person learning in mid-March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Districts and charter schools that have met strict safety criteria were cleared to move from remote-only to a hybrid model this week, although they were not required to do so.

Districts and schools still in the remote mode must meet these safety criteria, established by the CDC, to be cleared for reopening:

- District/school county is in the “green zone” for new daily cases and test positivity rates
- District/school has a PED-approved reentry plan
- District/school has safety and support plans in place, including any necessary upgrades to facilities and air filtration systems.

In addition, each district must have a written protocol on inspecting, repairing and providing maintenance on ventilation systems within all school facilities on an ongoing basis.

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**Sept. 11, 2020**

## **NEW MEXICO GOVERNOR'S STEM CHALLENGE GOES VIRTUAL, REGISTRATION DUE SEPT. 18**

Due to COVID-19 safety precautions, the 2020 New Mexico Governor's STEM Challenge will transition to an all virtual event including the statewide STEM Showcase to be hosted by New Mexico State University Dec. 5.

The NM Governor's STEM Challenge partners including NMSU, the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, Los Alamos National Laboratory Foundation and the New Mexico Public Education Department will be joined by industry partners from across the state.

The registration deadline is Sept. 18 and available at **<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NBNYGBY>**. All information including important updates and deadlines will be accessible via Canvas.

"The New Mexico Governor's STEM Challenge presents an opportunity for students to be creative and to collaborate on STEM solutions to issues we face in the state and across the globe," said NMSU President John Floros. "While there is great value to in-person peer-to-peer learning, our students are also developing important skills in learning and collaborating with peers in the virtual world. Going virtual with this challenge will make it accessible to additional students and better serve them and their families."

In its second year, the NM Governor's STEM Challenge is an opportunity for New Mexico high school students to use their problem-solving skills. The 10-person student teams will compete to find a solution to the question "how can you combine New Mexico's natural resources with technology to address regional/global needs?" Winners will be determined by industry employers in the state. The top teams will win up to \$5,000.

"I am proud of our students' tenacity, and I know New Mexico's diverse student population recognizes the potential that STEM jobs have to address local, state and global challenges," said New Mexico Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart. "The NM Governor's STEM Challenge is the ideal venue for students to practice their collaborative problem-solving and presentation skills, while utilizing engineering design, science and engineering practices to construct project models that could become the innovations of tomorrow."

In the first year of the program, 65 New Mexico high schools and more than 600 students attempted the challenge. One of the program's goals is to encourage the state's students and teachers to integrate and use NM STEM Ready! Science Standards in daily classroom curriculum.

"The Governor's STEM Challenge is all about using science and technology to solve problems" said Bill McCamley, Secretary of the NM Department of Workforce Solutions. "Giving students a successful experience while keeping them, their teachers and our sponsors safe will be us putting this idea in to practice."

The challenge reinforces skills such as teamwork, problem solving, innovation, STEM development, breakthrough technologies and presentation skills.

"The NM Governor's STEM Challenge offers New Mexico's youth to shine and have their ingenuity recognized. It is a chance for youth and their mentors to work and grow together to creatively solve real world problems," said Kersti Tyson, LANL Foundation director of evaluation and learning.

Companies participating include Air Force Research Labs, Boeing, Chevron, Deloitte, El Paso Electric, Facebook, LANL/Triad,N3B, Pattern Energy, PNM, Presbyterian, Sandia National Laboratories, Lovelace, Health Sciences Center, Molina Health Care and URENCO.

For specific information about the challenge visit  
<https://nmsu.edu/community/STEM-challenge.html>.

The 2020 New Mexico Governor's STEM Challenge program will be an all virtual event this year due to COVID-19 safety precautions. The program gives New Mexico high school students an opportunity to use their problem-solving skills.  
(Courtesy photo)

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Sept. 3, 2020**

 **Listen to the Sept. 3 news conference in Spanish**

## **SCHOOLS IN 25 COUNTIES MAY LAUNCH HYBRID MODEL SEPT. 8**

### ***OTHERS MUST WAIT FOR IMPROVED PUBLIC HEALTH CONDITIONS***

SANTA FE — School districts and charter schools in 25 New Mexico counties have been cleared to begin a hybrid mode of learning that allows students from pre-K through fifth grade to come to school two days a week wearing face masks and staying at least 6 feet away from others.

A complete list of districts and charters that have cleared strict safety reopening criteria from the state Public Education Department and may choose to reopen as soon as Tuesday, Sept. 8, in the hybrid mode will be posted on **the PED website** Friday.

Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart made the announcement at a virtual news conference Thursday

afternoon, based on local public health conditions and school readiness to protect students and staff from the virus and to respond rapidly if a case emerges.

“New Mexico educators from the Public Education Department to the classroom remain committed to two overarching goals: Protecting the health and safety of children and staff and maximizing the number of in-person learning opportunities,” Stewart said. “We have been preparing for this extensively, and I’m confident we will execute a safe in-person return for all communities that choose to do so.”

The hybrid model means cohorts of students rotate between remote and in-person learning, significantly reducing the number of students together in a classroom at the same time in order to maintain social distancing and allow schools time to thoroughly clean between groups.

The hybrid model is being phased in beginning Tuesday for children in grades pre-K through five in approved districts and charters. (Sixth-graders may also return if that’s the highest grade in a school.) Older students will remain in remote learning for at least the near-term future no matter the status of their district or charter.

School districts and charters that opened in August were required to use a remote-only instructional model. To move from remote to hybrid learning beginning next week, districts and charters had to meet specific safety criteria, including:

- They must be in counties with test positivity rates and new daily case rates that follow below the thresholds established by the state Department of Health. **This map shows those counties in green.**
- They must have a PED-approved plan demonstrating that their instructional, social-emotional and family engagement processes are documented and established; and,

- They must provide assurances that they've established comprehensive safety and response protocols, including COVID-Safe Practices for students and educators, provision of personal protective equipment, cleaning procedures and rapid response procedures in the event of a positive COVID-19 case.

Districts and charters can be in green counties but still not be ready to move to the hybrid mode if they are still finalizing their reentry plan or if their local school board or charter leaders deem a return to be unsafe. Schools and charters located in counties that are colored red, orange or yellow must remain closed for now to in-person learning even if they have an approved reentry plan. The Public Education Department will continue working with those districts to ensure successful delivery of remote learning in the interim.

Once granted official eligibility to return to in-person instruction by the state Public Education Department, local districts and charters decide whether to move to the hybrid mode or remain in an exclusively remote-learning model for now.

"In short, PED is not requiring any district or charter school to open for in-person learning. PED stands ready to assist every district, charter and school in the state in meeting the strict safety requirements and preparation efforts if those local entities decide they want to move into the hybrid model," Stewart said. "In addition to having an approved reentry plan, each school district and charter school needs to provide assurance that they can effectively implement COVID Safe Practices. To that end, PED along with the State Fire Marshal's Office, National Guard and local fire are available to provide on-site guidance and support to ensure that schools are implementing COVID Safe Practices properly so that educators and students are as safe as possible."

New Mexico's school reentry planning process has been months in the making and involved close coordination with

school districts and local leaders at every step. A school reentry task force provided detailed guidance later finalized by Stewart and his executive team.

Each district or charter was required to submit a reentry plan showing protocols in place to protect students and staff from the virus and to respond rapidly if a case emerges. PED officials continue reviewing plans based on this rubric and working closely with districts to address deficiencies and get their plans approved.

School districts and charters across the state have already purchased more than 3.5 million masks, and PED has worked closely with the state Department of Homeland Security & Emergency Management to distribute another 700,000 in the next two weeks.

PED has also:

- Offered additional training to administrators and their designees to ensure all schools are fully prepared to engage in rapid responses where positive COVID-19 cases occur;
- Established enforcement and inspection protocols to be sure schools follow their reentry plans;
- **Created this portal** where anyone concerned that a school is not following COVID-Safe Practices may report the incident anonymously.

“New Mexico owes a debt of gratitude to the outstanding educators who were forced to adapt quickly to remote learning in the spring and who must now adapt again to a hybrid mode. Their commitment and hard work throughout this project is nothing short of heroic. With their help, our focus will continue to be the effective delivery of high-quality education to our children during this pandemic,” Stewart said.

“We are also grateful to all New Mexicans who, by wearing masks and practicing social distancing, have reversed the dangerous upward trend in virus cases we saw this summer. In doing so, they made it possible for our

youngest learners to return to school. We must keep up that effort on their behalf and on behalf of the older students still waiting for their turn," Stewart said.

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*

**Aug. 25, 2020**

## **STATE AGENCIES, REGIONAL CO-OPS COLLABORATE ON CHILD CARE PREPARATIONS**

### **REMOTE LEARNING CREATES NEW NEEDS FOR NEW MEXICO FAMILIES**

SANTA FE — Two state agencies are partnering with state Regional Education Cooperatives to help families find the child care and supervision they need for school reentry during this pandemic year.

The New Mexico Public Education and Early Childhood Education and Care departments along with the Regional Education Cooperatives have prepared **this digital flier** with links to updated child-care information, including:

- A database of child-care options, searchable by county, ZIP code or school district;
- Information about how child care centers are staying safe;
- Eligibility information for child care assistance and an online application form;

- Information on how to become a temporary child care provider for friends, family and neighbors.

Families can also call Child Care Resource and Referral at 1-800-691-9067 or visit ECECD's "**Am I Eligible?**" site to apply directly for child care assistance.

"To those needing child care or supervision, you are not on your own. We're working hard to determine the extent and geography of those needs and to match families with qualified providers," said ECECD Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky.

Schools that have already opened are teaching remotely through Labor Day, when the state will begin phasing in a hybrid model in which students study remotely on some days and in the classroom on others.

"New Mexico families that never needed child care before may need it now due to remote learning. Through this partnership, the state is helping solve that problem so children get the supervision or care they need at any age," said PED Secretary Ryan Stewart.

"Child care is the backbone of our economy and it is critical that families have the information and resources they need to navigate these challenging times," said Andrea Fletcher, project lead for the Regional Education Cooperatives.

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**August 24, 2020**

**NOW IS THE BEST TIME TO GET YOUR CHILD'S  
IMMUNIZATIONS**



***BY PED SECRETARY RYAN STEWART & DOH SECRETARY  
KATHY KUNKEL***

If ever there were a time for immunizations, it is now. With the nation and the world struggling to stay healthy during the coronavirus pandemic, it's a time to look to one of the best public health success stories of the past century – vaccines. Yes, this is an unprecedented time, but there is long-standing precedent for how to best address infectious disease.

Millions of children and adults who would have died a hundred years ago now live long, healthy lives. Deaths from measles and diphtheria, paralysis from polio, and cancers from human papillomavirus have become rare, or are rapidly declining, due to easily accessible immunizations. Our elderly have greater protection from flu and pneumonia, and, fortunately today, new vaccines are in the pipeline to better protect us against the coronavirus pandemic.

This fall, we face a double threat of coronavirus and influenza. Flu vaccines are given from late summer through the following spring. Flu cases peak from December to March, though outbreaks can occur as late as May. To avoid overcrowding our hospitals and complicating life for clinicians as they try to manage COVID and flu cases, we need New Mexicans to get the flu vaccine in record numbers.

As stewards of public health and public education, we are deeply concerned that vaccine coverage rates for children in New Mexico are down 20% from pre-COVID rates – and this could expose us to outbreaks like measles. The good news is, according to a recent survey of providers, that over 90% of those who participated in the survey reported offering vaccines in their clinics, and 67% are offering adult vaccines. Also, 88% are telling their patients about the protective measures they have in place. Immunizations are safe and available.

Parents: please protect your families – call your health care provider and get everyone in your family up to date with immunizations. School vaccine requirements are still in force even with online and home schooling.

Everyone: please get your flu shot as soon as doses are available this year. No one wants to have flu and COVID-19 at the same time.

We are cautiously optimistic that we will have a vaccine for coronavirus by late 2020 or early 2021. The continuation of our COVID-safe practices, and a COVID vaccine, is what ultimately will allow us to open schools and businesses, visit family, have dinners and parties, and travel. Vaccines are a game changer. Please contact your primary care provider, public health office, school-based health center or pharmacy for more information on vaccines.

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*For Immediate Release:*

**August 20, 2020**

## **TWO OF NM'S TEACHERS WIN NATIONAL AWARDS FOR WORK IN STEM FIELD**

### **AWARDS ARE HIGHEST US GOVERNMENT HONORS**

SANTA FE — New Mexico's Public Education secretary today congratulated the two New Mexico educators who were 2019 National Awardees for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST).

- Melody Hagaman teaches computer science to ninth- to twelfth-grade students at Centennial High School in Las Cruces Public Schools.

- Jessica Esquibel teaches math at Taft Middle School in Albuquerque Public Schools.

Award recipients receive a certificate signed by the President of the United States, a paid trip for two to Washington, D.C., for events and professional development sessions, and a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation that may be used at the winner's discretion. The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching are the highest honors bestowed by the United States government specifically for K–12 math and science (including computer science) teaching. The award recognizes those teachers who develop and implement a high-quality instructional program that is informed by content knowledge and enhances student learning. Awardees serve as models for their colleagues, inspiration to their communities and leaders in the improvement of mathematics and science (including computer science) education. The National Science Foundation administers the awards on behalf of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

"I am so proud of the achievements these two teachers have attained; they deserve this distinctive national honor," said New Mexico Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart. "Having mentors like Ms. Esquibel and Ms. Hagaman helps to inspire our entire educator team and sets the bar where New Mexico needs to be to attract others to reach for the stars."

Hagaman is the technology lead at her school and mentors all new computer science teachers in Las Cruces Public Schools. She holds a Master of Education degree in technology and a Bachelor of Science degree in education. Additionally, through her work with New Mexico State University's (NMSU) CompThink, she mentors teachers and students who are interested in integrating computational thinking into their non-computer science courses. Hagaman is a program manager and facilitator for Project GUTS (Growing Up Thinking Scientifically) and she collaborates with both NMSU and the University of New Mexico as a curriculum developer and facilitator. She has presented workshops at the University of Virginia's Tapestry

program, helping teachers in four states identify strategies for recruiting and retaining females and other underrepresented students in computer science. Hagaman is active as an officer in New Mexico's Computer Science Teachers Association.

"On a personal level this award means a lot because I really have poured the last several years into broadening participation in computer science throughout the state and country—being awarded this honor validates the hard work others and I have put in," said Hagaman. "It is so exciting to receive PAEMST recognition just weeks after giving birth to my first child and it's my dream that he'll grow up in a society where recognition and accolades for teachers are the norm."

Jessica Esquibel has a Master of Education degree in instruction and has national board certification. She has taught math in Albuquerque Public Schools her entire career.

Esquibel has served as a department chair and level Tier 3 (highest level) regional instructor for many years. She has led monthly teacher technology studies for teachers in her district, bringing teachers together so they can learn from each other.

Esquibel also established a sixth grade math district professional learning center where teachers come together and share Common Core State Standards (CCSS)-aligned lessons and strategies.

"I thought being nominated for the Presidential Award was the highlight of my career," said Esquibel. "I am truly honored to have been chosen to represent New Mexico. I took on the process of applying to become a Presidential Awardee as an opportunity to learn, grow and reflect on my teaching. This award has been a reminder to me of the importance of learning and growing to ensure all my students are provided with opportunities to discover and engage with high quality math instruction."

Applications for teachers of grades K-6 are now open.  
Applications must be completed by October 26, 2020.

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July 29, 2020

### **School meals continue without in-person learning**

*NM PED has served almost 9 million meals since schools closed in March*

**SANTA FE** – No child will miss a school-provided meal due to remote learning to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, the New Mexico Public Education Department reaffirmed today.

Since in-person instruction ended March 16, the department has provided almost 9 million meals to New Mexico children through their school districts. That will continue.

“We’re going to work as much as we can through whatever obstacles arise to get all these children fed,” said Michael A. Chavez, director of New Mexico’s National School Lunch Program.

New Mexico school children are served by two federally funded nutrition programs: The National School Lunch Program, which provides free and reduced-price meals to qualifying children at their schools, and the Seamless Summer Option, which provides free meals to all children who seek them, no questions asked.

New Mexico switched to the summer program in March, with districts offering grab-and-go-meals in school cafeterias, congregate food drop-off sites and food deliveries by school bus drivers along remote transportation routes. (**Check here for summer meal sites.**)

This summer, every district and charter school in New Mexico was required to submit a school re-entry plan that includes a description of how meals will continue to be provided in various scenarios, including remote learning. Most districts indicated they will continue with the plan in place since March 16.

In addition to the school nutrition effort, the Early Childhood Education and Care Department served 5.2 million meals and snacks from the middle of March to the end of May while schools and many child care facilities were closed.

Over the summer, ECECD's **Summer Food Service Program** (SFSP) program has provided free meals for children across New Mexico, no questions asked. These efforts will continue through the end of August, and the department is seeking a waiver from the federal government that would allow the program to operate into September.

In addition, SFSP has been providing breakfasts and lunches each day to 2,858 children in 15 pueblos and around chapter houses that were closed to the public or observing traveling restrictions during the pandemic. These efforts are ongoing.

ECECD also will continue to operate the Child and Adult Care Food Program, which offers free and reduced-price meals to children and adults. Many organizations participate in the program, including Head Start programs, child care centers, before- and after-school care programs, family child care home providers, pre-K programs, emergency housing shelters, hospitals and clinics, schools, preschools and adult day care facilities.

"The Early Childhood Education & Care Department will continue to work closely with PED and the Governor's Office to ensure that every child in New Mexico has healthy, nutritious food throughout the pandemic and beyond," said Alejandra Rebolledo Rea, director of ECECD's Early Care, Education & Nutrition Division.

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July 23, 2020

## **State updates school reopening guidance, hits pause on 'hybrid model' for start of school year**

*Eligibility date for in-person learning postponed through Labor Day; professional development for educators and additional preparation for 'hybrid model' encouraged through August*

**SANTA FE** – The New Mexico Public Education Department on Thursday announced updates to the state's plan for the safe and methodical reentry into school for students and educators this fall amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Reflecting the change in the state's overall COVID-19 trajectory and continued steady rise in the spread of the virus around the state, the state has delayed the eligibility date for the return to in-person learning until September 8.

This means New Mexico public school students will not attend classes in person through at least Labor Day.

In accordance with this decision and existing **Public Education Department reentry guidance**, school districts and charter schools may continue to exercise local decision-making regarding the start date of school and online learning. All school districts will be eligible to begin the school year under distance or remote learning formats beginning in August. Currently, districts and charter schools representing over 40% of the state's students — including Albuquerque Public Schools, Santa Fe Public Schools, Silver City Public Schools, Grants Public Schools, Las Cruces Public Schools and others — have already announced plans to initially return in an online-only format. Many other school districts have communicated their preference for an online-

only format to begin the year as well. The delay of the in-person return date will have little impact on these plans.

Districts and charters wishing to maximize the amount of in-person learning also have the ability to adjust their calendars and set a school start date of September 8 should they choose to do so.

The state earlier this summer announced plans for a hybrid model of instruction to begin in school districts August 3, adopting a phased approach based on the public health conditions and epidemiological data available at the time.

However, the state's COVID-19 landscape has worsened in the intervening weeks. Since June 10, the rolling 7-day average of new COVID-19 confirmed cases per day in New Mexico has increased by 123% to an average of 256 cases per day. In addition, the state's share of younger individuals testing positive for COVID-19 has increased. Overall, over the course of the pandemic, 4.7% of New Mexico's COVID-19 cases have been within the age range of 0 to 9 years. In the last seven days, 6.5% of the state's COVID-19 cases have been identified in that age range. Similarly, 10% of the state's overall COVID-19 cases have been identified in the 10-19 age range; in the last seven days, 15.7% of the state's positive cases have been within that age range.

School districts are strongly encouraged to use the month of August to continue preparations for safe and limited in-person learning under a hybrid model of instruction and to conduct professional development for educators; the Public Education Department will support these planning and development efforts. Other requirements and recommendations **outlined in the original PED guidance** document — including requirements for social distancing and enhanced safety protocols upon reentry — remain largely unchanged.

All districts and charter schools must offer an online-only option for students, according to the Public Education



Department, and no schools can disenroll students or penalize families if they choose an online-only option.

“My focus has been and will remain right here: The health, safety and wellbeing of New Mexico students, educators, families and school communities,” said Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. “I do not feel comfortable beginning any form of in-person learning in the month of August. I know many parents and educators and students feel the same way. The current spread of COVID-19 in our state is a cause of great and well-founded anxiety. Until we can regain control of this virus, until our fight in this public health crisis begins to once again bear real fruit, we will not unduly risk even one New Mexican’s health or life or livelihood; we will not move unsafely or too quickly in our efforts to resume some form of ‘new normal’ in a COVID-positive world.

“With another month of strong collective efforts to fight COVID-19, using that time to continue to prepare and to help educators get the professional development they need to thrive in an online and remote environment, I am optimistic the state will be able to begin to adopt a hybrid model for phased groupings of students after Labor Day.

“I know everyone wants an answer: When will this be over? We all want it to be over. We all desperately want to hug our loved ones, to gather with friends and family and resume our work and education and livelihoods. To do that, we must stay committed and focused. We must treat fighting COVID-19 like a team sport. Everyone has a role to play. And together, I know, we will get there.”

Under the hybrid model, the number of students present in the building at any given time will be limited in order to ensure that six feet of social distancing can be maintained at all times. Students will alternate between in-person instruction at the school building and online instruction when at home.

The state will adopt a phased approach to reentry after Labor Day provided public health conditions warrant.

The first priority group to return to the classroom in a hybrid model will be PreK-5 students, special education and other high-risk students, followed by middle school students, followed by high school students. COVID-19 transmission rates, state health care resource capacity and state testing and tracing capacity, among other state gating criteria as tracked and analyzed by the Medical Advisory Team and Department of Health, will determine when public health conditions allow for each grouping to safely return to classrooms on a hybrid basis.

“Of course, our overriding goal remains to move all schools into a full school schedule as soon as it is possible to safely conduct classes in the traditional manner. But right now, given the volatility of the pandemic, New Mexico’s Department of Health and the Medical Advisory Team are cautioning us to move carefully in this phased-in manner,” Secretary of Education Ryan Stewart said.

The state’s pause on adopting the hybrid guidelines incorporates the concerns of families and educators about returning to the school environment amid the COVID-19 pandemic, while ensuring that students across the state have the greatest opportunity to return to and engage in essential learning and social environments in as safe a manner as possible.

PED will continue to coordinate with the Department of Health and state Medical Advisory Team on ongoing risk assessments.

As part of their reentry plans, schools and districts are required to provide breakfast and lunch to students even if students are learning remotely from home. The Public Education Department is encouraging schools and districts to provide these meals through established grab-and-go sites, as many did in the spring, while incorporating COVID-Safe Practices and safety protocols, such as staggered meal times.

The Early Childhood Education and Care Department is collaborating with the Public Education Department to stand up child care options throughout the state; the ECECD is additionally seeking to extend its Summer Food Service Program beyond the end of August to continue providing free, community-based meals.

Higher education institutions are working with the New Mexico Higher Education Department on a measured approach for reopening campus facilities and, additionally, establishing protocols to reduce COVID-19 spread and transmissions. Colleges and universities will be deploying online and remote learning across their campuses this fall except for clinicals, practicum or field-based experiences for critical workforce areas, such as healthcare, and vocational education. These plans will be posted **on the Higher Education Department website** as soon as next week.

“We are seeing too many positive cases across New Mexico, and higher education institutions are no exception,” said Stephanie Rodriguez, interim authority at the Higher Education Department. “The tight-knit communities in which our colleges and universities operate will be at risk if the virus is given the opportunity to take root. I’m grateful for the collaboration of our higher learning institutions in keeping student populations and campus communities safe. In addition, many regents and governing boards will be making the difficult decision to postpone fall sports. This is not easy, but it is the best thing we can do to protect the health and wellbeing of our collegiate communities and New Mexicans.”

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July 7, 2020

**\$67 million in Pandemic EBT Cards to be issued this week**

## *Supplements for school-age children receiving free or reduced-price lunches*

**SANTA FE** – About 168,000 New Mexico families whose children receive free or reduced-price lunch at school will receive \$67 million in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, or food stamps, this week, the Human Services Department announced today.

The benefits will be issued on Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer cards in the name of the oldest child in each household and mailed out this week.

More than 250,000 school-age children in New Mexico qualify for the P-EBT program, authorized by the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which provides assistance to families with children who are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

The families of over 87,000 New Mexico school children have already received nearly \$35 million in food benefits that were issued in May. The benefit is calculated monthly for each eligible student in the household equal to the daily reimbursement for free breakfast and lunch (\$5.70), multiplied by the average number of days school was canceled in the month. It equates to a dollar amount of approximately \$399 per student covering the period from March 16, to June 19, 2020.

The Human Services Department partnered with the New Mexico Public Education Department to validate the physical addresses school districts have on file to ensure the P-EBT cards get to the households where the children reside.

The Human Services Department has two hotlines for individuals to inquire about the status of their P-EBT benefits. The P-EBT Hotline is 505-660-4822, or they can call the Human Services Department Customer Service Center at 1-800-283-4465.

The P-EBT program provides a supplemental food-purchasing benefit to current Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program households and a new electronic benefit to other eligible households to offset the cost of meals that otherwise would have been available at school.

Under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, states may submit a plan to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture for providing P-EBT benefits to SNAP and non-SNAP households with children who have temporarily lost access to free or reduced-price school meals due to pandemic-related school closures.

State agencies may operate P-EBT when a school is closed for at least five consecutive days during a public health emergency designation during which the school would otherwise be in session.

“The Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer program is an important way to ensure that children will get the nutrition they need, especially when schools are closed during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Karmela Martinez, New Mexico Income Support Division director. “We have been working hard with the Public Education Department to get these benefits out to the right families as quickly as possible.”

The Human Services Department provides services and benefits to more than 1 million New Mexicans through several programs including: the Medicaid Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Child Support Program, and several Behavioral Health Services.

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June 23, 2020

## **NMPED Announces School Reentry Plan to Safely Reboot Learning**

**SANTA FE** – New Mexico’s Public Education Department on Tuesday announced **the state’s plan for students to safely and methodically resume classes this fall**, beginning with careful preparation and guidance from the New Mexico Department of Health and Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham’s medical advisory team.

“New Mexicans from all walks of life and all corners of the state have come together in amazing ways and through noteworthy sacrifice to contain the spread of the coronavirus in our state,” said Education Secretary Ryan Stewart. “We’re not through this pandemic by a long shot, but as we learn to live safely in a COVID-positive world, this collective effort has flattened the curve to the point where we can engage in the process of reentering our school buildings.”

Secretary Stewart one month ago convened a reentry task force that included educators, parents, administrators, public health officials, and many other stakeholder groups to look at options for safely and expeditiously getting students back on track with learning. The work of the task force informed the guidance below, in addition to surveys of families, educators, and research.

The state’s goal is to move all schools into a full school schedule as soon as it is safely possible. Across New Mexico, the 2020-2021 school year will begin with a hybrid model in which the number of students in the building is limited to allow for maximum social distancing. Students will rotate between in-person and online learning.

The Department of Health and medical advisory team will continue to aggressively track and regularly assess rates of spread of the virus. Based on the data from this initial period, state health officials will determine when and where schools can safely move into a full reentry mode.

This phased approach to reentry represents a prudent and responsible process that will ensure educators, school staff,

students and their families are as safe as can be every single day.

- The phased approach allows the state to analyze the impact of a controlled reentry before moving into a full-scale implementation. This will help ensure that the epidemiological assumptions about how schools impact virus transmission can be thoroughly tested before full reentry.
- Schools will likely need to implement hybrid or remote models at some point in the year. The phased approach allows for preparation and practice in the implementation of this model at the beginning of the year so that schools and communities are ready for this eventuality later in the year
- The phased approach balances the legitimate concerns of families who expressed anxiety about returning full-scale right away with those who are rightly eager to return to a full school schedule.

In addition, schools will implement enhanced preventative measures. The following requirements will be in place for all schools whether operating in a hybrid or traditional model:

- Large group gatherings will be avoided at school buildings;
- Face coverings are required except while eating, drinking and exercising (with very limited exceptions for students and staff with medical conditions precluding wearing of a mask or face shield; those medical conditions must be documented);
- Schools must adhere to social distancing requirements of their designated category;
- All staff must be screened every day, including a temperature check and review of potential symptoms upon arrival at school;
- All staff must participate in ongoing surveillance testing;
- All sites must coordinate with local health officials to conduct contact tracing and rapid response testing;
- All transportation staff and students boarding buses must wear face coverings;

- Meals must be provided to students during both in-person instruction and remote learning.

Schools must create plans for and be prepared to remain in a hybrid model or shift to a distance learning model should health conditions necessitate such actions.

Public Education Department leaders will host a conference call for the media on Tuesday, June 23 from 2:00-2:30 pm. Please contact Deborah Martinez at **Deborah.Martinez2@state.nm.us** to RSVP and to receive login information.

"I have complete confidence that this reentry plan keeps the health and safety of our students as the number one priority as we navigate the next school year amidst the pandemic," Public Education Department Secretary Ryan Stewart confirmed. "I have seen the resilience of our youth, their families, the community and our teachers who have never faltered in their commitment to excellence. Our combined efforts will help us regain the momentum that began with the election of Governor Lujan Grisham and her focus on education."

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June 12, 2020

## **Early Childhood Education and Care Department Announces Advisory Council**

**SANTA FE** – Today, the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) announced the formation of its Advisory Council.

"When Gov. Lujan Grisham and the Legislature created ECECD last year, they wisely chose to enlist the help of New Mexicans from communities across the state," said ECECD



Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky. “As we work to build a department that responds quickly and effectively to the needs of children and families, these diverse voices and perspectives will be incredibly valuable.”

“Parents, early childhood professionals, and other community stakeholders spent years advocating for the creation of a state agency dedicated to early childhood. Now, many of those same voices will help shape how ECECD’s success is measured and the long-term sustainability of the agency – and we’re thankful for their service,” said Mariana Padilla, Director of the Children’s Cabinet.

## **Background**

The Advisory Council fulfills a requirement established in SB 22, the 2019 legislation that created the Early Childhood Education and Care Department. Members were chosen from a pool of over 300 applicants by an independent panel composed of participants from New Mexico’s Public Education Department (PED), Higher Education Department (HED), and ECECD. In making its selections, the panel followed a rubric of applicant requirements outlined in SB 22, prioritizing members who reflect geographic, cultural, linguistic, gender, ethnic, and racial diversity and experience in a range of early childhood and higher education settings.

Members of the Council include:

1. Alma Martell / Organizer, OLE / Albuquerque
2. Amber Cadena / Educator, Chins / Alamogordo
3. Amber Wallin / Deputy Director, NM Voices for Children / Albuquerque
4. Amelia Black / ECE Faculty, Dine College / Crownpoint
5. Anita Rios / Facilitator, Community Partnership for Children / Albuquerque
6. Anna Marie Garcia / Vice President of Early Childhood Education, LANL Foundation / Espanola
7. Barbara Tedrow / Owner, Smiling Faces Child Care Center / Farmington

8. Candace Keams Benally / Principal and PreK Administrator, Central Schools / Shiprock
9. Catron Allred / Director, Central NM Community College / Albuquerque
10. Coda Omness / Department Chair CTE, ENMU-Ruidoso / Ruidoso
11. Crystal Tapia / Executive Director and Owner, Noah's Ark Children's Academy & Early Childhood Solutions / Albuquerque
12. Dana Bell / Interim Director, Cradle to Career Policy Institute UNM / Albuquerque
13. Diana Hammond / Pre-K Coordinator and Special Education Teacher, Ruidoso Municipal Schools / Ruidoso
14. Doris Salazar / Lead Pre-K Teacher, Desert Montessori / Santa Fe
15. Elsa Begueria / Superintendent, Lake Arthur Municipal Schools / Lake Arthur
16. Elizabeth Beers / Director of Community-Based Programs, Presbyterian Healthcare Services, Socorro General Hospital / Socorro
17. Elizabeth Torrison / Early Intervention Executive Director, NAPPR Inc. / Albuquerque
18. Elsa Rojas / Lead Nursery Teacher, Partnership for Community Action / Albuquerque
19. Francine Cachucha / Program Director, Jicarilla Child & Family Education Center / Dulce
20. Franz Joachim / General Manager & CEO, New Mexico PBS and KNME-TV / Albuquerque
21. Gil Vigil / Executive Director, Eight Northern Indian Pueblos Council / Tesuque Pueblo
22. Hope Morales / Executive Director, Teach Plus / Roswell
23. Joan Baker / Executive Director, BEFORE / Albuquerque
24. Julie Lucero / Executive Director of Special Education, Santa Fe Public Schools / Santa Fe
25. Kelly Dineyazhe Hunter / Assistant Professor, Navajo Technical University / Crownpoint
26. Lori Martinez / Executive Director, Ngage New Mexico / Las Cruces
27. Maria Elena Salazar / Lecturer III, UNM Early Childhood Education Degree Programs / Albuquerque

28. Mark Sparenberg / IT and QA Coordinator, Child & Family Services Inc. of Lea County / Hobbs
29. Melanie Skinner / Principal and NMPreK Coordinator, Brown Early Childhood Center / Portales
30. Michael Armendariz / Director, Tresco Children Services / Las Cruces
31. Noemi Langley / Center Coordinator and Family Advocate, Child & Family Services Inc. of Lea County / Hobbs
32. Nora Hernandez Cordova / Equal Justice Paralegal Fellow, New Mexico Immigrant Law Center / Albuquerque
33. Ruth Ann Ortiz / Board of Directors President, New Mexico Association for Infant Mental Health / Las Cruces
34. Sally Green / Preschool Supervisor, Roswell Independent School District / Roswell
35. Taylor J. Etchemendy / UNM Taos Mentor Network Coordinator and Director of INSPIRE Bilingual Early Learning Center / Taos
36. Terry Anderson / Executive Director and Project Coordinator, Community Partnership for Children / Silver City
37. Trisha Moquino / Founding Executive Director and Guide, Keres Children's Learning Center / Cochiti Pueblo
38. Representative Rebecca Dow / Truth or Consequences
39. Kelly Klundt, Legislative Finance Committee
40. Secretary Debbie Romero, Department of Finance and Administration (Meribeth Densmore, Representative)

The Council will also include two professional facilitators, and will meet four times this year before submitting a series of recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature.

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**June 5, 2020**

## **Lujan Grisham administration releases additional summer resources for families**

*Multi-agency state effort addresses access to food, child care, cultural learning opportunities*

**SANTA FE** – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Friday announced additional resources for New Mexico families interested in summer youth programming. Through a collaboration between the Department of Cultural Affairs, Public Education Department, Early Childhood Education and Care Department, and Children, Youth & Families Department, the state has assembled a comprehensive array of supports for families – including a directory of available programs, online and print resources, child care resources and other materials.

These resources are available on

**<https://www.newmexico.gov/summer-youth-programs/>**, along with a full list of **COVID-19 Safe Practices for in-person programs**.

“Children have always been a top priority of this administration. They must be able to play and learn and eat during the summer, even during the current health crisis. Working together, these state agencies are making sure that happens and happens safely,” Gov. Lujan Grisham said.

CYFD will support food deliveries to communities in need in New Mexico, including tribes and pueblos, throughout the summer. To date, CYFD has led the coordination and distribution of more than 1 million pounds of food and 5.4 million meals throughout the state.

CYFD will also continue to prioritize outreach and support to children and youth in custody throughout the summer. Staff are working to connect families and foster parents to summer recreational and educational activities for children and families, many offered through the Early Childhood Education and Care Department and the Department of Cultural Affairs, including options for child care in addition

to fun activities, books, arts and crafts and science experiments that can be done at home. For older youth and young adults, CYFD will continue to help with access to housing, jobs, apprenticeships, and preparation for fall academic activities. Increased video and telephonic “visits” with children in foster care and young people previously in CYFD custody who are now living independently will address any emergent needs through the summer months.

“One thing we’ve seen during this incredibly difficult time has been our staff’s desire to connect more with families and families’ reciprocal engagement as that’s happened,” CYFD Secretary Brian Blalock said. “We’re seeing children and young people trusting more than ever that CYFD is here for them, and that’s helping increase access to supports and helping them thrive. These more frequent and meaningful connections are something we’re looking to continue doing for the long term.”

CYFD also continues to support telehealth services throughout the summer. People who have benefited from the convenience of increased behavioral health access at home and through the New Mexico Crisis and Access Line and its companion app, NMConnect, will be pleased to know telehealth services are here to stay.

The Early Childhood Education and Care Department will continue to assist families in accessing child care for children 6 weeks to 12 years of age in centers and homes. Families who need care can call New Mexico Kids (1-800-691-9067). ECECD is also working to make state government programming available to child care centers – including DCA’s **“bookmobile”** program.

“Supporting families during this public health emergency means striking a balance: providing opportunities for children to learn, grow, and develop, while preventing the spread of the virus.” said Early Childhood Education and Care Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky. “These resources do just that.”

The New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs is dedicated to continuing to provide educational, enriching programming to the children of New Mexico and their families throughout the summer. All DCA's annual **Summer Youth Programs** will continue in a virtual environment. Exciting events and programs, including the first statewide summer reading program, will be available online. New Mexico's museums, historic sites, and cultural institutions are creating fun, educational activity kits that will be distributed to families via programs throughout the state. Families can take advantage of the weekly Friday night concert series, Our Fair New Mexico, and a variety of virtual exhibit tours, fun DIY activities, and engaging video content can be found on **Visit Virtually**. Explore all of DCA's resources on <http://www.NewMexicoCulture.org>. Check back often as content is always being added.

"The incredible educators and instructional staff at all of DCA's divisions have been working hard to bring our state's rich culture into the homes of all New Mexicans this summer," said Cultural Affairs Secretary Debra Garcia y Griego, "We are committed to providing hands-on activities and virtual experience to help New Mexico families and children throughout the summer."

The Public Education Department determined that it would not be possible to meet the statutory requirements of K-5 Plus for summer 2020. However, Extended Learning Time Programs may still be possible in August while adhering to public health requirements and best practices.

The PED encourages school districts to run locally funded, remote, or virtual summer school opportunities. The **Summer School 2020 Guidance** document published by PED on May 21st offers districts and school leaders resources and considerations based on what has been learned in the shift to remote learning and the research behind summer learning. Recent evidence suggests that expanding summer learning beyond remediation to provide students with rigorous opportunities to preview and practice knowledge and skills aligned to upcoming grade-

level standards is effective at bolstering student achievement. Likewise, providing social and emotional learning supports for students yields benefits in more traditional school contexts. Families are encouraged to check in with their local schools to learn about remote summer program opportunities in their area.

The PED offers the following resources to families in support of social and emotional well-being:

- **Strategies for Trauma-Informed Distance Learning**
- **Supporting Mindfulness in Learning**
- **CASEL Resources: scroll down to see links that support SEL at Home**
- **Building Positive Conditions for Learning at Home (In both English and Spanish)**

In addition, Grab and Go meal sites for children will continue operating throughout the summer – and educational, cultural and social emotional resources will be available for families at these sites. A site list is **available here**.

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**May 21, 2020**

### **NMPED Announces School Reentry Task Force; Requests Feedback from Families**

**SANTA FE** – The New Mexico Public Education Department is asking families to complete an online survey about their experiences with continuous learning during the school closing period triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Survey responses will help school districts better meet community needs and help the New Mexico School Reentry Task Force shape plans for reopening public schools in the state.

Parents can expect to spend about eight minutes per student to complete the **New Mexico Family Education Survey**. They will answer both open- and close-ended

questions about their child's level of engagement in school, the family's level of satisfaction with their school's expectations and supports, their school's ability to meet the child's individual needs, and their communication preferences.

The Family Education Survey launches the day after the first virtual meeting of the New Mexico School Reentry Task Force. The Task Force, convened by Education Secretary Ryan Stewart, is made up of stakeholders who meet virtually to discuss the myriad and complex issues of returning to school safely.

The task force represents the geographic diversity of New Mexico and includes educators, administrators, students, parents, public and school health officials, legislators, advocates and union and school board representation. A complete list of task force members is published below.

"The public health situation is still changing too quickly for us to develop a single plan for return to school," said Secretary Stewart. "We'll be looking to our School Reentry Task Force to contribute their perspective and help shape a number of contingency plans for a safe return to school."

Those plans will likely include in-person instruction, continued distance learning and hybrid options.

Secretary Stewart encouraged all New Mexican families to complete the online Family Education Survey.

"With our Continuous Learning Plans, educators, students and families were asked to quickly adapt to an unfamiliar model. We know that there were some bumps along the road, and we want to learn what worked well and what needs to be improved for the way forward."

NMPED is also launching a website to make it easier for schools, educators and families to learn about local schools and their offerings. **NM Vistas** will celebrate excellence in New Mexico's schools and identify and provide resources for schools needing more support. Visitors to the site will



share the successes of New Mexico's diverse and dynamic schools as they tell their stories in their own words.

Parents will find information they can use when advocating for their children, schools and communities. Other valuable information available on NM Vistas includes academic growth data, attendance and graduation rates, and learning environment insights.

NM Vistas rolls out after an extensive beta testing period and will continue to evolve. Future phases will be dedicated to connecting teachers to quality resources and providing information to help families choose the best school for each child's needs. As the site evolves, visitors will be invited to provide feedback via a brief survey.

### **School Reentry Task Force Membership**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>City of Residence</b>
Valentin Anaya	Parent, Socorro Public Schools and Developmental Disabilities Planning Council Member	Socorro
Patricia Beecher	Superintendent, New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired	Santa Fe
Olivia Calabaza	President, New Mexico School Boards Association	Bernalillo
Kathy Chavez	Executive Vice President, American Federation of Teachers of New Mexico	Las Cruces
Victoria Chavez	Parent, Albuquerque Public Schools	Albuquerque
Michele Coleman	Founder, Attachment Healing Center	Albuquerque
Tami Coleman	Chief Financial Officer, Albuquerque Public Schools	Albuquerque
Farra Fong	Program Supervisor, Office of Youth Homelessness, Children Youth and Families Department	Santa Fe
Pattie Gipson	Chair, New Mexico Public Education Commission	Las Cruces

Joe Guillen	Executive Director, New Mexico School Boards Association	Santa Fe
Jamie Iglesias	Parent, Deming Public Schools	Deming
Patricia Jimenez-Latham	Project Manager, Transform Education New Mexico	Albuquerque
Julie Lucero	Special Education Director, Santa Fe Public Schools	Santa Fe
Stephanie Ly	President, American Federation of Teachers of New Mexico	Albuquerque
Sally Marquez	Executive Director, New Mexico Activities Association	Albuquerque
Thomas Massaro	State School Health Officer, New Mexico Department of Health	Santa Fe
Marvin McAuley	Superintendent, Mora Independent School District	Mora
Pandora Mike	Principal, Ojo Elementary School	Shiprock
Silvia Miranda	Elementary School Teacher, Clovis Municipal Schools	Clovis
TJ Parks	Superintendent, Hobbs Municipal Schools	Hobbs
Mary Parr-Sanchez	President, National Education Association of New Mexico	Las Cruces
Helena Ramirez	Student, Animas Public Schools	Animas
Arsenio Romero	Superintendent, Deming Public Schools	Deming
Jennifer Sanchez	Parent, Albuquerque Public Schools and Developmental Disabilities Planning Council Member	Albuquerque
Jennifer Schoolcraft	Middle School Special Education Teacher, Carlsbad Municipal Schools	Carlsbad
	Chair, Senate Education Committee;	
Bill Soules	High School Teacher, Las Cruces Public Schools	Las Cruces
Mandi Torrez	Elementary School Teacher, Bernalillo Public Schools	Placitas

Roy Tracy	Director of Accountability, Department of Diné Education	Window Rock
Charlotte Alderete- Trujillo	Head of School, South Valley Prep Charter School	Albuquerque
Linda Trujillo	Vice Chair, House Education Committee	Santa Fe

May 18, 2020

NM’s graduation rate improves a full percentage point in 2018-19 school year

**SANTA FE** — New Mexico’s 2019 high school graduation rate edged up to 74.9 percent, a one percent increase over the previous academic year, the state Public Education Department reported Friday.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart expect to see even more gains as the state’s substantial investments in its schools are fully realized in next year’s report on the class of seniors graduating this spring.

The 2018 graduation rate was 73.9 percent, so the 2019 rate of 74.9 percent is an increase of one percent (1.0).

“While the fact that the graduation rate increased is undoubtedly a positive, we know we have significantly more to do to reach and surpass the national average of 85.3 percent,” Secretary Stewart said. “Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham’s commitment to investing in our students so that they get the resources they need to succeed was one of the draws to this job, and I look forward to seeing the results of the state’s continued focus as we move forward.”

The 2019 report showed significant improvements in the percentage of English language learners and Native Americans graduating. The rate was 73.3 percent for ELL students, up 2.2 percent from 2018. The Native American graduation rate improved 3.8 percent to 69.6 percent.

About 25,000 seniors are eligible to graduate each year from New Mexico's 89 school districts.

Other sub-group graduation rates for the class of 2019 include:

- 8 percent of females graduated compared to 71.1 percent of males;
- 4 percent of Hispanic students graduated;
- 7 percent of economically disadvantaged students graduated.

The highest graduation rates were at College and Career High School, 98.8 percent; and 84.1 percent at Volcano Vista High School – both in Albuquerque; Las Cruces Early College High School, 93.7 percent; V Sue Cleveland High School in Rio Rancho, 89.9 percent; Gallup High School, 86.2 percent; Ruidoso High School, 84.7 percent; and Artesia High School, 89.1 percent.

**A complete list is in the attached presentation by Daniel Barto, Ph.D, a NMPED statistician.**

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## **May 15, 2020**

### **Public Education Commission Re-Schedules the Work Session to Thursday, May 21, 2020 and the Regular Meeting to Friday, May 22, 2020**

**SANTA FE** – The Public Education Commission has re-scheduled its work session originally scheduled for Thursday May 14, 2020 to next Thursday, May 21, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. They have also re-scheduled their regular meeting originally scheduled for Friday May 15, 2020 to next Friday, May 22, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. Both meetings will utilize a Zoom Webinar format.

Technical problems associated with electronic participation caused the re-scheduling of the meetings that were planned for Thursday May 14, 2020 and Friday May 15, 2020.

The agenda for the PEC meetings will be posted on the PEC web page on Monday, May 18, 2020. Go to <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/public-education-commission/2020-public-education-commission-meeting-information/>

Zoom Webinar links and phone numbers will be on the PEC Agenda for members of the public to access the work session and the meeting.

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## May 5, 2020

**Contact:** Deborah Martinez, Media Relations

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## May 4 – 8 is Teacher Appreciation Week, NM Says ‘Thank You’

**SANTA FE** — New Mexico’s 22,000 teachers go above and beyond the call every day to ensure their students’ success, and this week we put them in the spotlight to show how much we all appreciate them.

Every day, our teachers challenge students to be better, explaining things they don’t understand, being role models and helping them get back up when they fall. This is Teacher Appreciation Week, and the New Mexico Public Education Department is launching a social media campaign with “Twenty-Five Ways to Thank a Teacher.”

Students are most aware of the hard work their teachers do for them, especially now, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic that has forced everyone to adapt to online learning. Teachers have had to modify their lesson plans and talk to their classrooms through cameras instead of interacting one-on-one. And they are meeting the challenge.

During Teacher Appreciation Week, parents are showing their gratitude with thanks to teachers for advocating for their children, for caring for each child as though they are

members of their own family, and for pushing their students' potential.

"Our teachers are our trusted messengers; they celebrate our language and culture," says PED Cabinet Secretary Dr. Ryan Stewart. "I am so grateful to each and every New Mexico teacher who carries on, despite unprecedented challenges like the current public health emergency that has forced them to teach in new ways, from home. They continue to lead with grace and determination, holding themselves accountable, and letting their students know they'll keep on leading them down the road to academic success."

Follow the "Twenty-Five Ways to Thank a Teacher" campaign on PED's **Twitter** and **Facebook** feeds; you can join the conversation with your messages of support and use #NMLovesTeachers.

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**May 5, 2020**

**Contact:** Ashley Espinoza, Human Services Department

505.670.3264

### **New Mexico to feed 245,000 vulnerable children affected by COVID-19 school closures**

*\$97.8 million in additional food benefits*

**SANTA FE** — New Mexico families will receive more than \$97 million in additional food benefits – enough to feed about 245,000 vulnerable children — following federal approval of a Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer Program.

The New Mexico Human Services Department and the Public Education Department submitted the request jointly to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards are used like debit cards to buy groceries. Pandemic-EBT assistance will be

deposited directly to existing EBT cards for families already receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits.

New Mexico households with children who receive free or reduced-price meals will receive benefits of \$5.70 per child, per day for the 70-day period from March 16, 2020 when public schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, through June 19, 2020. New Mexico households can receive Pandemic-EBT as well as continue to receive food distributions from their child's school site.

March, April, and May benefits will be issued in mid to late May, and Pandemic-EBT benefits will continue to be issued through June 19th, the average date of normal public school closures.

The program will also benefit families that did not previously qualify for free or reduced-price meals but may now qualify due to changes in their household's circumstances as a result of the restrictions implemented for non-essential businesses because of the COVID-19 response. Those families should contact their school district food service office to apply for benefits. If determined eligible, their children will receive Pandemic-EBT, and the benefit will be issued for the month determined eligible through June.

The Human Services Department provides services and benefits to more than 1 million New Mexicans through several programs including: the Medicaid Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Child Support Program, and several Behavioral Health Services.

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**April 30, 2020**

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## **NMPED Announces Partnership to Help “Missing Students” Get Back On-Track with Continuous Learning**

**Santa Fe** – For some students, going from a structured classroom setting to learning from home is a tough climb, and during this pandemic some have chosen not to engage – or are encountering obstacles – with distance learning.

But New Mexico’s Public Education Department is working to re-engage these students through a partnership with Graduation Alliance – an organization that provides academic and social-emotional support to help students realize their goals of earning a high school diploma.

A targeted effort will focus on students who, for any number of reasons, are struggling in a learning environment that has shifted in profound ways.

Through the NMPED-Graduation Alliance partnership, titled ENGAGE New Mexico, students whom their district has identified as struggling or disengaged will get an academic coach to work with them on a plan to get back on track.

The project, an agency-wide initiative, aims to support students socially and emotionally as they work to meet academic standards. “Targeted outreach and support have been proven to make a positive difference in a child’s life, especially under challenging circumstances,” said Dr. Gwen Perea-Warniment, Deputy Secretary of Teaching, Learning and Assessment. “Providing a dedicated outreach team to work in support of our educators will ensure that our teachers can focus on teaching, while the ENGAGE team works to re-establish contact with students described as ‘missing’ from their continuous learning classrooms.”

Katarina Sandoval, Deputy Secretary of Academic Engagement and Student Success says, “Some of our students are struggling to engage with schoolwork right now. We’re offering an additional layer of support from an adult who is not a teacher or family member to motivate students to stay connected and focused on their futures.”



Students will benefit from ongoing support levels within the general design of Response to Intervention (RTI) models. Using these models, Graduation Alliance has worked together with school districts across the US for more than a decade to serve vulnerable students in a remote learning environment.

NMPED Cabinet Secretary Dr. Ryan Stewart is pleased at how school districts have opted in to the ENGAGE NM program, with more than 7100 students identified as needing intervention so far. “Given Graduation Alliance’s track record of bringing students back into the educational fold, I am certain they will be able to help the state of New Mexico re-engage our students and help see them through this difficult transition to distance learning,” Dr. Stewart said. “I look forward to seeing every student earn a diploma and persevere, despite obstacles that have been placed in their way.”

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*For Immediate Release*

**April 28, 2020**

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## **NM’s Top Education Official Asks the Education Workforce to Participate in the Census**

**Santa Fe** – Seven-billion. That’s how much money NM stands to gain every year for the next decade, if everyone fills out the Census. It’s easy, it only takes 10 minutes, and by joining the count you can help ensure that our state’s schools get the federal funding they need. The money that flows from an accurate Census funds initiatives like school breakfast and lunch programs, healthcare, roads, special education and public safety.

That’s why NM Public Education Cabinet Secretary Dr. Ryan Stewart is calling on all of the state’s dedicated school workers to fill out their Census forms and keep showing

support for our children. “Our workforce all across the state has jumped in to make sure our kids get healthy meals and lesson plans, despite the unprecedented challenges they’ve faced over the last few weeks,” Secretary Stewart said. “Now I’m asking them to do one more thing, to be counted and to convince their friends and families to join in the Census count so New Mexicans, especially our children, will receive the education, meals and other resources they deserve.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how critical it is to deliver services to students, even when they’re not at school. As we look ahead to the next 10 years, it’s important to make sure educators can count on vital funding for New Mexico’s children that Census dollars provide.

Teachers and other school personnel should encourage families in each community that filling out their Census is easy. It can be one of the best ways to improve life for each of us. Being counted matters. In fact, the state loses almost \$4,000 (\$3750) per year for every person left out of the Census count. NMPED Cabinet Secretary Dr. Ryan Stewart urges teachers to promote completion of the Census – it matters now more than ever.

For more information about the 2020 Census in New Mexico, visit <https://www.icountnm.gov/home/>. To complete your census form, visit <https://2020census.gov/>.

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**April 22, 2020**

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**TEACHERS, INVITE A DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL  
AFFAIRS EDUCATOR INTO YOUR VIRTUAL CLASSROOM**

SANTA FE, N.M. – As school districts across the state have transitioned to online instruction for the remainder of the academic year, teachers can supplement lesson plans by inviting an educator from one of the divisions of the New

Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) into their virtual classrooms.

Find out about traditional sheep herding. Uncover what an archaeologist does. Learn how women won the right to vote in Spanish-speaking countries. Explore the diversity of southwest pottery, textiles, paintings, and jewelry. Discover the history of airships and build your own blimp.

These and a variety of additional topics and programs are available for virtual instruction by a staff educator of the DCA, which includes eight museums, seven historic sites, New Mexico Arts, the Office of Archeological Studies, the Historic Preservation Division, and the New Mexico State Library.

Teachers can fill out an “Invite a DCA Educator” form online found on the department’s website at **[www.newmexicoculture.org](http://www.newmexicoculture.org)**. Requests will be forwarded to the appropriate department division, which would then coordinate with the teachers.

“If we can’t have classes visit our amazing museums, libraries, and historic sites, then we want to go to them, and our new request form should make it easy to connect with teachers and students,” said State Librarian Eli Guinnee.

### **About the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs**

Created in 1978 by the New Mexico Legislature, the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) is New Mexico’s cultural steward, charged with preserving and showcasing the state’s cultural riches. With its eight museums, seven historic sites, arts, archaeology, historic preservation, and library programs, the DCA is one of the largest and most diverse state cultural agencies in the nation. Together, the facilities, programs, and services of the Department support a \$5.6 billion cultural industry in New Mexico.

Events, news releases, and images related to activities in divisions of the DCA can be accessed at **[media.newmexicoculture.org](http://media.newmexicoculture.org)**.

**Mar 27, 2020**

## **GOVERNOR: K-12 SCHOOL CLOSINGS MUST CONTINUE TO PREVENT POTENTIAL SPREAD OF COVID-19**

SANTA FE – New Mexico public education will shift to a learn-at-home model as schools remain closed for the rest of the academic year, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and state education and child care officials announced Friday.

The decision is part of a two-pronged plan to protect New Mexicans from COVID-19 and ensure that children are protected, fed and educated and that families are supported through this crisis.

The governor previously ordered all public schools closed for three weeks, March 16-April 3, but warned at the time that an extension could be needed. It came Friday with a new executive order that extends the closing through the end of the school year. The executive order can be found **here**. See answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the order **here**.

New Mexico had 136 confirmed positive COVID-19 cases as of Thursday afternoon, including some that are being investigated as community spread, the state Health Department said. School closings are designed to minimize community spread.

“We’re working very hard to contain the virus, and we have to continue to take aggressive steps to mitigate spread and protect New Mexicans of every age all across the state. It is more important than ever that we make sure all New Mexicans are heeding the imperative to stay home,” Gov. Lujan Grisham said. “Keeping schools closed is one of the most important tools we have to support the social distancing that can help us reduce and mitigate the spread of the virus.”

“Schools will not be required to make up the missed instructional days between March 16 and April 3, but for the

remaining weeks of the school year to be waived, districts must develop both technology-based and non-technology-based continuous learning plans,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said.

“We know that this decision will have tremendous implications for our families, but we must act to keep our communities safe and healthy,” Stewart said. “We also know that we have extraordinary teachers, support staff and school administrators in New Mexico. If the temporary closure period has shown us anything, it’s that our creative educators and school support staff are committed to meeting the academic, social and emotional needs of our students in challenging circumstances.”

High school credits will be awarded based on flexible approaches, including completion of work, demonstration of competency for course completion and expanded equivalency like work experience. The Public Education Department also recommends schools move to pass/no credit rather than grades during this period.

“While it can be difficult to view the current situation with anything beyond anxiety and apprehension, we believe the wide-reaching consequences of this moment present a tremendous opportunity to transform education to serve all students, especially students who have traditionally been furthest from opportunity,” said Deputy Secretary Kara Bobroff.

“The decisions we make today are made with all of our students in mind. During this unprecedented time, we will continue to build into the public education system healing opportunities for students, families, communities and all New Mexicans,” she said.

Public colleges and universities are not included in the closure order, but most have either extended their spring breaks, moved classes online or both.

School-based health centers, educational programming for youth in facilities, and licensed child care facilities (centers and homes) serving workers whose jobs have been deemed essential will continue operating.

The closing plan includes these provisions:

### **SPECIAL NEEDS**

Students with special needs will receive all feasible supports and accommodations that can be delivered while maintaining safe social-distancing. School districts must continue to support the transition of children from early intervention into preschool special education. Schools offering behavioral health services will remain open for that purpose.

### **HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS**

Individual districts will design measures by which seniors can demonstrate eligibility for graduation. Those measures could include testing, completing a series of assignments, achieving a set score on a college entrance exam or demonstrating applied work experience. Schools will be required to identify and support students in danger of not being able to graduate.

High school seniors will have until June 19 to demonstrate eligibility, and those who fail to do so will be offered credit recovery in the summer; they can also appeal to their local school board or to the secretary. No student will be denied graduation for lack of access to demonstrate competency.

Actual graduation ceremonies will be postponed or held virtually, depending on the prevailing public health order at the time.

Many high school seniors will have completed a college entrance exam already; additionally, many higher education institutions are expected to waive that requirement, and both the ACT and College Board are considering offering those exams in the summer.

**ADVANCED PLACEMENT**

Advanced placement exams will be offered online and will be limited to material students should have covered up to March. Accommodations will be made for those students who need access to technology to take the tests.

**SCHOOL PERSONNEL**

School personnel and contractors will remain on call and continue being paid as usual. Districts have already received guidance on activities employees can continue performing during the closure. Bus contractors are encouraged to continue operating bus routes to deliver food and hard-copy lessons. Special education and other service contractors are encouraged to provide virtual services, collaborate with general education teachers and maintain documentation.

**SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS**

Every New Mexico school district has a plan to continue providing childhood nutrition during this period. You can see those plans [here](#).

The Public Education Department is also seeking permission to distribute Electronic Benefits Transfer cards that would allow qualifying families to purchase meals with their free breakfast/lunch allotment.

**CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

With schools closed, some children may be more vulnerable to abuse and neglect in their homes. In addition, teachers, school administrators and other school staff are often the first to notice changes in behavior and appearance that may indicate abuse or neglect. New Mexicans must fill this void and be extra aware of the safety and well-being of children they know and those in their neighborhoods. Any citizen can report suspected child abuse or neglect by dialing #SAFE from their cell phone or by calling 1-855-333-SAFE from a land-line.

**SUPPORTING FAMILIES**

The Behavioral Health Division of the New Mexico Children,

Youth and Families Department is working with the New Mexico Human Services Department and managed care organizations to help providers and families create digital access to mental health services for children and youth.

### **COLLABORATING WITH NATIONS, TRIBES AND PUEBLOS**

Tribes, pueblos and nations are located in some of the most rural parts of New Mexico and often experience extreme health care provider shortages. The governor and state agencies are collaborating with tribal leaders to support their needs in these times.

These state agencies will continue working with the tribes, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Indian Education to support students who attend BIE and tribally run schools: Indian Affairs Department, Public Education Department, Children, Youth and Families Department and Early Childhood Education and Care Department.

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**March 13, 2020**

### **NEW MEXICO CLOSES K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO PREVENT POTENTIAL SPREAD OF COVID-19**

SANTA FE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced Friday that New Mexico K-12 public schools will close for three weeks, effective Monday, March 16, to mitigate the risk of community spread of COVID-19.

The order closing all public pre-schools and K-12 schools will be effective through April 3 and may be extended as conditions warrant. Schools will not be required to make up the missed instructional days at the end of the academic year, the Public Education Department said.

“This is a proactive measure. New Mexico has no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our schools, but closing schools proactively **has been shown to be one of the most powerful non-pharmaceutical interventions we can deploy,**” Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said. “New Mexico is



not going to wait as long as some other states to make the hard decisions. We will use every tool in our toolbelt as a state to keep New Mexicans safe,” she said.

Public colleges and universities are not included in the closure order. However, the governor strongly urged regents and governing boards to move or extend spring breaks and shift educational and business services to online models to the greatest extent possible.

School buildings also will remain open, including cafeterias and school-based health centers. School buildings could also be used for temporary child-care operations.

New Mexico joins other states, districts and counties in proactively closing schools before the community experiences a critical mass of confirmed cases, a strategy known as **“flattening the curve.”**

“We recognize the important roles schools play in delivering community services beyond educational instruction. However, we’ve heard loud and clear from superintendents and charter school leaders about their challenges to provide a safe, effective and healthy school environment in the current circumstances. With that feedback and concerns from our families in mind, we made the difficult decision in the interest of public health to close schools for three weeks to help combat the spread of COVID-19,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said.

“We’re listening. We’re in touch with educators and parents. This is not only the best practice for the state, it also fairly supports families, educators and schools,” the governor said.

Sixty New Mexico school districts will be on spring break for one of the three weeks of the announced closure period. The Public Education Department is encouraging the six districts with spring breaks planned after April 3 to consider moving those breaks to occur during the three-week closing.

Schools that are able to deliver distance learning to students may choose to offer this option during the closure period. PED will continue exploring all resources to provide educational opportunities to students while maintaining social distancing protocols and the prohibition of mass gatherings.

“New Mexico remains committed to providing our children with a quality education, but education is a service, not a place,” the governor said. “We’re dedicated to increasing opportunities to give students access to educational material during this period, and more information will be coming on that. Today, we’re working on containment, making sure kids are safe, making sure kids and families are fed, making sure the health care system is ready, making sure information is readily available and, last but not least, making sure our workers are paid and have security in knowing what’s coming.”

New Mexico has requested and expects to receive waivers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to allow school meal programs to continue with new flexibility. School kitchen staff will be on the job, preparing shelf-stable meals for grab-and-go pickup at school cafeterias and other sites for the many New Mexico families that depend on school meals.

USDA will reimburse the full cost of breakfasts and lunches for schools where 50 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, which covers nearly all New Mexico schools. PED is also working with other agencies like the Department of Aging and Long Term Services and the National Guard to identify potential additional meal distribution models.

School buildings also could be used for temporary child care facilities to meet additional demand during the closing.

“We recognize that child care is a critical service to support families and keep them safe,” the governor said. “We’re working very hard to expand child care opportunities,

including requesting the necessary waivers from the federal government, in order to provide that service. If we need expanded child care, we're also going to make that happen in public schools."

The governor expects all school personnel to be on call during the closing and to continue being paid as usual. Stewart said the expectation is that all districts will provide wage security for employees.

School closings also will affect working parents, who will have to find child care or use leave time or telecommute (if those options are available) to stay home and care for children.

Starting Monday, the work-search requirement will be waived for anyone whose job is affected by COVID-19 who seeks unemployment compensation. Following a one-week waiting period, these workers could receive \$433 per week for three weeks.

This compensation could help contracted school workers like bus drivers, event staff or servers who are either laid off or have their hours reduced.

Workers are highly encouraged to apply for benefits online at <http://www.dws.state.nm.us>. There is an 800 number available as well (877-664-6984) but online is the preferred option.

The Department of Workforce Solutions is exploring other funding sources to compensate workers who lose income due to COVID-19.

"Our goal is to keep businesses afloat and to protect workers and families," the governor said.

State government will remain open, and state employees who need to be home with children will be allowed to telework, if possible; if not, they will be required to use personal leave time.

New Mexico had 10 presumptive positive COVID-19 cases as of Friday morning. All of them have a travel connection, the state Health Department said. School closings are designed to prevent or minimize community spread, which means at least some people infected with the virus are not sure how or where they became infected.

At least 13 countries so far have closed schools nationwide as a result of the pandemic, including China, where more than 233 million students were affected, according to the United Nations. Hundreds of K-12 schools in the U.S. have also closed as a proven measure to slow the spread of disease and, in turn, save lives.

The governor said she decided on a three-week closing based on facts available right now. “We’ll make additional decisions as they are warranted. Our goal is to be so effective at containment that three weeks is all we will need,” she said.

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**March 2, 2020**

### **GOV. LUJAN GRISHAM SIGNS HOUSE BILL 10, ENDS STUDENT CO-PAYS FOR REDUCED-FEE LUNCHES**

SANTA FE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Monday signed **House Bill 10**, which eliminates student co-pays for reduced price school breakfast and lunch. This bill, which passed both chambers of the Legislature with unanimous support, complements the Governor’s Childhood Hunger Initiative, a comprehensive plan to address one of the highest food insecurity rates in the nation.

“Many of our families miss the criteria to qualify for free school lunch, but still have difficulty coming up with the co-payment for a reduced fee meal, particularly where they have multiple children in school,” Gov. Lujan Grisham said. “A 40-cent copay should never come between a child and the food they need to grow and learn.”

The governor praised the sponsors – Reps. Willie Madrid and Melanie Stansbury and Sen. Pete Campos – for their leadership on this measure, which will make school meals accessible to an additional 12,500 students in New Mexico.

House Bill 10 comes with an appropriation of \$650,000 to the state Public Education Department to cover the co-pay costs for students who qualify for reduced-price meals. This legislation will reimburse the districts for the copays normally paid by the child, ensuring that districts are kept financially whole. Because of federal matching rates for school meals, the new law has the potential to bring in approximately \$9 million in federal funds to the state of New Mexico.

The bill signing happens to fall on the first day of National School Breakfast Week, a weeklong celebration of the national School Breakfast Program and the academic and health outcomes for children who eat school breakfast.

“This school year, New Mexico is on track to serve more than 13,500,000 school breakfasts,” said Secretary of Public Education Ryan Stewart. “That’s nearly 14 million opportunities to demonstrate to our students that we are invested in ensuring they have the nutrition they need to be able to focus in the classroom and retain what they are learning.”

New Mexico was recently recognized by the Food Research & Action Center in their School Breakfast Scorecard. New Mexico ranks third in the nation on the rate of participation of low-income students in the **School Breakfast Program**. In New Mexico, for every 100 students who participate in the School Lunch Program, 69.4 students eat School Breakfast; only Vermont and West Virginia reach more low-income students with their breakfast programs.

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**March 2, 2020**

**NEW MEXICO RANKS THIRD IN THE NATION FOR  
STUDENTS EATING BREAKFAST AT SCHOOL**

## ***NM PED CELEBRATES NATIONAL SCHOOL BREAKFAST WEEK***

SANTA FE — Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> is the first day of National School Breakfast Week, a weeklong celebration of the national School Breakfast Program and the academic and health outcomes for children who eat school breakfast. New Mexico has much to celebrate when it comes to equitable access to school meals.

“This school year, New Mexico is on track to serve more than 13,500,000 school breakfasts,” says Secretary of Education Ryan Stewart, “that’s nearly 14 million opportunities to demonstrate to our students that we are invested in ensuring they have the nutrition they need to be able to focus in the classroom and retain what they are learning.”

New Mexico was recently recognized by the Food Research & Action Center in their **School Breakfast Scorecard**. The state ranks third in the nation on the rate of participation of low-income students in the School Breakfast Program. In New Mexico, for every 100 students who participate in the School Lunch Program, 69.4 students eat School Breakfast; only Vermont and West Virginia reach more low-income students with their breakfast programs.

332,734 New Mexican students are enrolled in a school breakfast program this school year across 846 participating schools. 218 of those school sites offer a program known as Breakfast After the Bell.

“School Breakfast programs are a proven strategy to boost academic achievement, reduce absenteeism and improve student nutrition,” says Katarina Sandoval, Deputy Secretary of Education. “And we know that when breakfast is moved out of the cafeteria and served after first bell, more students participate and realize the benefits of a healthy breakfast.”

National School Breakfast Week kick-off also coincides with Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's signing of House Bill 10, the bill to eliminate co-pays on reduced-price school meals. Thanks to a \$650,000 appropriation, 12,000 children qualifying for reduced-price breakfast and lunch will now be able to eat for free, and school districts will not lose out on any funds. This bill, which passed both houses with universal support, is an important tool in the Governor's plan to End Childhood Hunger in New Mexico.

PED will be posting photos of school breakfasts from around the state this week on their **Facebook** and **Twitter** channels.

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**Jan. 29, 2020**

## **NEW MEXICO FOOD & FARMS AND SCHOOL NUTRITION DAY AWARDS CEREMONY SET FOR FEB. 6**

SANTA FE – Several awards will be presented at the eighth annual New Mexico Food & Farms Day and School Nutrition Day Awards Ceremony Thursday, Feb. 6 in Santa Fe.

The ceremony recognizes contributions to, and active participation in, New Mexico's local food and farm to school programs. Held from 9 to 10 a.m. in the Rotunda of the State Capitol Building, the event will celebrate continuous statewide efforts to expand and strengthen connections between New Mexico's local food and education systems. The event is free to the public.

New Mexico Secretary of Agriculture Jeff Witte, New Mexico Secretary of Education Ryan Stewart, Sen. Linda Lopez and Sen. Shannon Pinto will present the following awards:

- School Nutrition Program of the Year award: Gadsden Independent School District
- Farm to School Program of the Year award: Zuni Public School District
- Farmers' Market of the Year award: Tucumcari Farmers' Market

- Organization of the Year award: Agri-Cultura Network
- Farmer of the Year award: Dorothy Bitsilly, Red Willow Farm, Navajo Nation

Stakeholders and advocates for student nutrition and farm to school around the state include the New Mexico Department of Agriculture, New Mexico Public Education Department, New Mexico Department of Health, New Mexico Farm to School Alliance, New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association, New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council, New Mexico School Nutrition Association, Hunger Coalition and Hunger Caucus.

"I congratulate all award recipients for their outstanding efforts in getting New Mexico-grown foods into our state's school cafeterias," New Mexico Secretary of Agriculture Jeff Witte said. "It's an honor to attend the New Mexico Food & Farms Day and School Nutrition Awards Ceremony and to have the opportunity to present this year's Farmers' Market of the Year Award to Tucumcari Farmers' Market."

"Our Farm to Schools programs not only bring the world of agriculture alive for our students, they also increase access to fresh, healthy food for families, which is a crucial strategy in closing the educational opportunity gap," New Mexico Secretary of Education Ryan Stewart said. "Congratulations to all of the award winners – we appreciate your service to our schools."

For more information about the New Mexico Food and Farms and School Nutrition Day Awards Ceremony, email Kendal Chavez at [kendal.chavez@state.nm.us](mailto:kendal.chavez@state.nm.us) or call 505-827-1807

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**January 1, 2020**

**NEW MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
ANNOUNCES TRANSITION TO PRAXIS  
NEW ASSESSMENT TOOL TO BE USED FOR EDUCATOR  
LICENSING**



SANTA FE — The New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) has begun transitioning to a new licensure test for educators.

Beginning Jan. 1, prospective educators are now able to take either of two tests — the NES Series of Tests developed by Pearson or the Praxis Series of Tests developed by ETS. Beginning Sept. 1, only the Praxis test will be offered.

NMPED chose Praxis after reviewing test options and considering input from stakeholders, including education preparation leaders, superintendents and district human resource professionals.

This decision supports one of the four major goals of the NMPED: To build a robust educator ecosystem for the state of New Mexico.

Evaluators who provided feedback said they were particularly impressed by the multi-step process ETS uses to mitigate bias and ensure cultural relevance. The Praxis tests also offer test takers personalized support at no additional cost through a partnership with Khan Academy.

Information on teacher assessments is available on **NMPED's website**, which has been updated to reflect the transition.

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**November 12, 2019**

## **NM STUDENTS TO TAKE NM-MSSA ASSESSMENT IN GRADES 3-8, PSAT IN GRADE 10**

SANTA FE – New Mexico Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart announced today that the Public Education Department (PED) has signed a multi-year contract with Cognia™ to provide the mathematics and English language arts (ELA) assessment for grades 3-8. Cognia is a school improvement organization that offers assessment, accreditation and continuous improvement services.

Additionally, students in grade 10 will be administered the PSAT assessment from College Board™.

With the PED's contracts with College Board and Cognia in place, the following summative assessments will replace PARCC™ and the Transition Assessment for Math and English Language Arts (TAMELA) in spring 2020 and serve as NM's official student assessments:

- Students in grades 3-8 will participate in the New Mexico Measure of Student Success and Achievement (NM-MSSA) math and ELA assessment on the platform offered by Cognia.
- Students in grade 10 will participate in the PSAT on the College Board platform.
- Students in grade 11 will participate in the SAT with essay, both on the College Board platform.

Under the terms of these contracts, the PED may acquire additional elements to expand the statewide assessment system in future years.

"We believe this suite of assessments is more meaningful for students and less burdensome on classroom instructional time. These assessments will provide more meaningful data about how our students are performing academically and how instruction can be adjusted to meet the needs of all students," said Secretary Stewart. "We are grateful to the public for the thoughtful input provided throughout the process of developing a new assessment system."

The NM-MSSA assessment is fully aligned to state adopted NM Common Core State Standards. The cost per student for the NM-MSSA is \$38.92, which is covered entirely by the state. The NM-MSSA will contain at least one writing prompt, constructed response items and other item types for each grade. The current estimated testing length for the NM-MSSA is 5.5 to 6 hours, which is approximately 3 hours shorter than PARCC.

The NM-MSSA item bank will be expanded over time to include custom developed writing prompts created by NM educators. By incorporating educator designed items into the NM-MSSA, educators will be able to ensure that the assessment remains culturally relevant to the backgrounds and experiences of NM's students.

The platform offered by Cognia is already familiar to test coordinators, teachers and students throughout the state, as Cognia is the current vendor for the NM Assessment of Science Readiness (NM-ASR) and the Standards Based Assessment (SBA) Spanish Reading test.

Cognia's data reporting offers improved reporting features and will better equip teachers with dynamic data views to inform instructional decisions. Parents will also be able to use the data reporting system to view individualized student reports.

Schools will also have the option to administer Cognia "testlets". Testlets are miniature assessments which measure specific content standards, therefore providing educators, administrators and parents detailed data on where students are succeeding and where they need support.

In spring 2019, the PED held a series of community conversations across the state. Over 800 voices were heard during outreach sessions. A summary of the community conversations was provided to the Student Success Task Force, which developed recommendations that would build a more balanced assessment system. Among those recommendations were adopting an assessment that maintains alignment to state adopted standards and eliminating unnecessary testing time. The Student Success Task Force also recommended adopting a grade 11 assessment that has meaning beyond high school. With the adoption of NM-MSSA, PSAT and the SAT, the PED has moved away from PARCC to more meaningful assessments aligned with stakeholder feedback.

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Nov. 8, 2019

## **TROOPS TO TEACHERS CELEBRATES VETERANS TEACHING IN NM**

SANTA FE – To honor the service of New Mexico’s over 140,000 veterans, the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) is highlighting the work of military veterans who have transitioned into our state’s education workforce. On Monday, November 11<sup>th</sup>, New Mexico Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart will be personally contacting individuals participating in the state’s Troops to Teachers program (TTT), which provides professional coaching and financial support to current and former military members transitioning into the education workforce, to express gratitude for their service.

“We are proud to support transitioning service members as they prepare to enter the classroom,” said Secretary Stewart. “Leadership, organization, patience, courage – these are all skills cultivated through military service and skills needed in the classroom as well.”

A featured service member participating in NM’s TTT program is Cory Cass, who is preparing to teach middle school after leaving the Air Force.

“I chose to be a teacher as a second career because I had the opportunity to have a lot of great teachers that helped influence who I am today. I joined the Air Force after high school to help get the education and leadership skills that I wanted to bring to the classroom. In my 11 years in the Air Force, I have traveled the world, met political leaders and attended leadership courses. I’ve accomplished many goals that I set before I joined so that I could be the best teacher I can be in the classroom. Once I become a teacher, I hope

that I can inspire children with the stories that I have collected in the Air Force to show them that they can accomplish any goal they dream of.”

-Cory Cass, SSgt, USAF

New Mexico is also home to many service members who have already completed their teacher certification and are now teaching in our schools. Keri Delucia is a veteran and teacher in the Alamogordo School District.

“After my time in the military, I discovered that the service aspect of a career was even more important to me. After pursuing my education, I went to rejoin the workforce. I was offered multiple jobs, but they lacked the meaning that I needed to find job satisfaction. I had little desire in the jobs related to my degree and soon realized I needed a career where I could continue to serve, as opposed to punching a clock day after day. As a teacher, I am able to fulfill this need to continue to serve my community on a local level. I think my military service and the skills I have learned in my military service have made me a better educator, especially as a kindergarten teacher – where being able to adapt and overcome, to be flexible, multitask, pay attention to detail and work well with others in a team are highly utilized in the classroom, as much as they were in my time as an aircraft mechanic.”

-Keri Delucia, Kindergarten teacher

NM began participating in TTT through a joint grant application with Colorado in 2018. NM and Colorado are now in the second year (2019-20) of the 5-year grant award. Since 2018, NM’s TTT program has grown to service over 170 active duty, veteran, retired and separated military personnel.

New Mexico utilized TTT grant funds to hire an education recruiter to provide career counseling and placement assistance for eligible members of the armed forces wishing to teach in New Mexico’s public schools. Grant money has

also been used to provide eligible applicants with stipends of up to \$5,000 to cover expenses incurred in obtaining the required educational level, certification or licensing to teach in a NM public school classroom.

NM's TTT program is also working to address our state's critical teacher shortage by encouraging veterans to pursue teaching opportunities in geographic areas with staffing shortages.

The TTT Colorado and New Mexico programs recognize the importance of relationships with teacher candidates, school district leadership, institutions of higher education and staff at the departments of education and TTT program office. These relationships have significantly increased the number of candidate contacts and mentorship to these candidates over the last year.

TTT was established in 1994 to assist transitioning service members and veterans in beginning new careers in public, charter and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools.

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## **EIGHT NEW MEXICO SCHOOLS IN FOUR DISTRICTS TO UNDERGO TRANSFORMATION THROUGH INDIGENOUS EDUCATION INITIATIVE**

### ***GRANT FUNDS TO SUPPORT 3-YEAR SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM TO MEET NEEDS OF NATIVE STUDENTS***

Santa Fe – New Mexico Public Education Department Deputy Secretary of Identity, Equity, and Transformation Kara Bobroff announced today that eight schools in four districts will receive a total of \$800,000.00 in grant funds as part of the Indian Education Initiative.

Funded schools for the Indigenous Education Initiative are Cuba Elementary School, Cuba Middle School and Cuba High School in Cuba Independent School District (\$250,000); Amy Biehl Community School and Santa Fe High School in Santa Fe Public Schools (\$200,000); Santo Domingo Elementary and Middle Schools in Bernalillo Public Schools (\$200,000); and Vista Grande High School in Taos Municipal Schools (\$150,000).

“Cultural engagement is a vital part of education,” said Deputy Secretary Bobroff. “We want all students in New Mexico to be college and career prepared, and a key component of that is having a strong sense of self identity.”

The purpose of the Indigenous Education Initiative (IEI) is to combine innovation, flexibility, and technical assistance in order to meet community priorities for education, and to respond to the changing educational landscape and identified needs of Native students in New Mexico. Select schools in funded districts will participate in a three-year redesign program. Years one and two will focus on an internal review of school processes, community feedback, and the design of a school model based upon community-identified priorities. In year three, schools will re-launch based on their community-designed plan. This plan will prioritize academic excellence and cultural relevance in education, and contain new accountability measures as well as support structures for sustainability.

Cuba Independent School District (CISD) will use grant funds to increase communication and collaboration with Cuba’s local Navajo chapter. With the aid of the Indigenous Education Initiative grant, CISD will work to create an aligned and embedded curriculum that supports Native American students, while still meeting the needs of the entire student body. CISD’s overall goal for the IEI program is to further empower Native American students, therefore allowing them to find their self-worth and self-identity, which is crucial not only to academic success, but to their overall well-being.

Santa Fe Public Schools will be using grant funds to enrich current programs supporting Native American students. Amy Biehl Community School will work to further develop its collaboration with the Institute of American Indian Arts, which invites visiting artists and storytellers into classrooms. Santa Fe High School plans to develop its Project Venture program.

Bernalillo Public Schools (BPS) will be using grant funds to develop its “Toward Culturally Relevant Curriculum” program for Native American students at Santo Domingo Elementary and Middle Schools. This program will be developed in collaboration with Santo Domingo Pueblo. The purpose of the program is to provide a culturally relevant curriculum that is rooted and aligned with Pueblo core values, culture, and environment.

Vista Grande High School (VGHS) in Taos Municipal Schools will partner with Taos Pueblo to create an education model that is inclusive of the learning styles of Native students and of Native histories, perspectives, struggles, and successes. The overall goal of Vista Grande’s grant project is to create meaningful awareness of Taos Pueblo and its customs for both students and school staff at Vista Grande. All students in the Taos community will benefit from a greater understanding of the Indigenous history in Taos County, and the shared past that all of Taos shares. VGHS believes that increasing the number of students who have an understanding of the shared past of Taos County will lead to a more just society that values all people and instills cultural humility.

The Indigenous Education Initiative grant supports the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) in its efforts to address the needs of students identified as “at-risk” in the Yazzie Martinez Ruling. The PED is excited to provide this additional support to New Mexico’s Native community, and will continue to focus on serving the diverse needs of all New Mexico students.



## The Request for Application for the Indian Education Initiative grant can be found here.

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nov. 1, 2019

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### **\$40 MILLION GRANT AWARDED TO IMPROVE STUDENT LITERACY OUTCOMES**

#### ***GRANT FUNDS WILL SUPPORT 5-YEAR FEDERAL LITERACY PLAN***

SANTA FE –The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) has been awarded a \$40 million federal grant to improve literacy outcomes for students in New Mexico, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced Thursday.

The Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant from the U.S. Department of Education will be paid out over a five-year period.

“Research clearly demonstrates that a high-quality, literacy-rich environment beginning in a child’s early development is one of the most important factors in determining school readiness, high school graduation, college access and success, workforce readiness and civic engagement,” Gov. Lujan Grisham said. “Literacy skills are vital in supporting critical thinking as well as access to new innovation and technologies,” she said.

The new grant, in conjunction with the current Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Grant, will use targeted federal literacy funding for birth through grade 12 in three specific ways: (1) teacher professional development, (2) research-based interventions for struggling students, and (3) a generational approach that promotes family literacy.

The governor established *A New Direction for New Mexico Schools* outlined in her 11-point plan for improving the state's educational system with a primary goal of addressing the large achievement gap in reading and math between New Mexico students and their peers nationally.

The plan includes initiatives to expand access to high-quality early care and education, and ensures equal opportunities to prepare every student for success. It also supports the PED in its efforts to address the needs of students identified as at-risk in the Yazzie Martinez court ruling.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**TEACHING THE TEACHERS EARNS PROFESSIONAL  
LEARNING COACH LACY RIVERA A \$25,000 MILKEN  
EDUCATOR AWARD*****NEW MEXICO EDUCATOR SERVES ALL STUDENTS BY  
AMPING UP STAFF SKILLS AT LOS LUNAS HIGH SCHOOL***

**SANTA MONICA, Calif., (Oct. 22, 2019)** Lacy Rivera is a teacher's teacher. Literally. She lifts students at New Mexico's Los Lunas High School indirectly, by helping educators teach more effectively and efficiently, with a common goal to improve school performance and raise student test scores. As the school's professional learning coach, Rivera employs a creative, risk-taking approach as she mentors instructors and hones teachers' skills with data-focused initiatives and a relentlessly upbeat manner.

Rivera's innate positivity got a turbo boost this morning at a surprise school assembly where she was presented with a Milken Educator Award by CEO of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, Dr. Candice McQueen, together with New Mexico Secretary Designate of Education Ryan Stewart. An ebullient Rivera was named a 2019-20 recipient of the national recognition, which comes with an unrestricted

\$25,000 cash prize. She is the only Milken Educator Award winner from New Mexico this year, and is among up to 40 honorees for 2019-20.

The Milken Educator Awards, hailed by *Teacher* magazine as the “Oscars of Teaching” has been opening minds and shaping futures for over 30 years. Research shows teacher quality is the driving in-school factor behind student growth and achievement. The initiative not only aims to reward great teachers, but to celebrate, elevate and activate those innovators in the classroom who are guiding America’s next generation of leaders. Milken Educators believe, “*The future belongs to the educated.*”

Rivera is brightening that future for Los Lunas learners by coaching-up her school’s teaching team in myriad ways. As a dedicated professional development advocate, Rivera leads teaching workshops, mentors new teachers, improves staff morale and promotes improved teacher-parent communication. She also assists pre-service teachers before they get to LLHS or other schools by serving as an adjunct professor at the University of New Mexico.

“Lacy Rivera sees the big picture, and she knows how to coach and mentor her fellow teachers to foster whole-school collaboration that benefits students,” said McQueen. “Her results-oriented approach coupled with a heartfelt love of learning makes her a teacher’s teacher. We are proud to welcome her as a Milken Educator.”

“Lacy Rivera epitomizes the quality teachers we have in New Mexico,” said Stewart. “Her creativity, drive for excellence, and fierce commitment to her students are changing lives and inspiring our leaders of tomorrow. I look forward to working closely with Ms. Rivera to include her voice and her passion for students in the development of our strategies and programs to provide every New Mexico student with a world-class education.”

“Los Lunas Schools are incredibly blessed and honored to have such an amazing individual work with us on our quest

to become the Premier School District in the State of New Mexico,” said Dana Sanders, Superintendent of Los Lunas Schools. “Ms. Rivera exemplifies the very essence of the word premier. She is creative, inspiring and gifted when it comes to the art of teaching. There are few people who could, in any way, stand up to Lacy’s level of commitment and undying passion for the teaching profession.”

### **About Milken Educator Lacy Rivera**

As the professional learning coach at New Mexico’s Los Lunas High School (LLHS), Lacy Rivera impacts every classroom. She teaches the teachers through consultation, collaboration and coaching. Keeping a watchful eye on new educators, she tailors her support to their particular challenges. Rivera organizes learning walks, lunch-and-learn programs and instructional rounds to give all LLHS teachers the opportunity to observe and learn from each other. The district is working toward becoming a Professional Learning Community (PLC), and Rivera leads that effort at LLHS by helping departments develop essential standards, formative assessments, data evaluation methods and interventions for students who need additional support. The school is preparing for a 1:1 MacBook program, so Rivera has helped her colleagues incorporate Google Classroom, Clips and other applications into their lesson plans.

In her previous role chairing the English department, Rivera gladly explored, practiced, adopted and modeled new instructional methods. When New Mexico schools first introduced Khan Academy, Rivera piloted the program in her classroom and trained others. She is willing to take risks and try unusual practices if they help students learn. Positive and hopeful, Rivera motivates colleagues with unending optimism and a growth mindset, always grounding her suggestions in data and the latest research. Last year Rivera developed an intervention program for use by Algebra I teachers at LLHS; by year’s end, student scores rose 20% on PARCC math assessments. Thanks to Rivera’s

support, LLHS saw a boost in teacher retention last year—not a single teacher left the school.

Rivera has served on the Guiding Coalition, a group focused on improving instruction at LLHS, and helped create its mission, vision, values and goals. She leads monthly workshops on topics like classroom management and parent-teacher conference preparation for the district's New Teacher Support program. Rivera also works with other coaches in the district, serving as lead for the secondary PLC. New instructional coaches often shadow Rivera and count her as a mentor. As an adjunct professor at the University of New Mexico, she helps pre-service teachers prepare for careers in education. Though Rivera no longer has a classroom at LLHS, students seek her out for college recommendations and job shadowing opportunities. Each year seniors who earn an academic letter can recognize an educator who has had an impact on their high school experience; Rivera's name comes up again and again.

Rivera earned a bachelor's in English in 2006 and a master's in secondary education in 2008 from the University of Notre Dame. She is pursuing a doctorate at the University of New Mexico in language, literacy and sociocultural studies.

More information about Rivera, plus links to photos and a video from today's assembly, can be found on the Milken Educator Awards website at

**<https://www.milkeneducatorawards.org/educators/view/Lacy-Rivera>.**

Milken Educators are selected in early to mid-career for what they have achieved and for the promise of what they will accomplish. In addition to the \$25,000 prize and public recognition, the honor includes membership in the National Milken Educator Network, a group of more than 2,700 top teachers, principals, and specialists dedicated to strengthening education.

In addition to participation in the Milken Educator Network, 2019-20 recipients will attend a Milken Educator Forum in Indianapolis from March 26-28, 2020 where they will network with their new colleagues and exchange ideas with state and federal leaders on the future of education. In addition, the Milken Educator Awards' "Why Not Us" program will pair each 2019-20 recipient with a veteran Milken Educator mentor to explore and prepare for expanded leadership roles that strengthen education practice and policy.

More than \$140 million in funding, including \$70 million in individual \$25,000 awards, has been devoted to the overall Awards initiative, which includes powerful professional development opportunities throughout recipients' careers. Many have gone on to earn advanced degrees and be placed in prominent posts and on state and national education committees.

The Awards alternate yearly between elementary and secondary educators. Unlike most teacher recognition programs, the Milken Educator Award is completely unique: Educators cannot apply for this recognition and do not even know they are under consideration. Candidates are sourced through a confidential selection process and then are reviewed by blue ribbon panels appointed by state departments of education. Those most exceptional are recommended for the Award, with final selection made by the Milken Family Foundation.

The cash award is unrestricted. Recipients have used the money in diverse ways; for instance, on their children's or their own continuing education, financing dream field trips, establishing scholarships, and even on the adoption of children.

To get regular updates on the surprise Milken Educator Award events, follow and use the #MilkenAward hashtag on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Everyone is encouraged to watch the tour at **[www.facebook.com/milkeneducatorawards](https://www.facebook.com/milkeneducatorawards)**,

[www.twitter.com/milken](https://www.twitter.com/milken),  
[www.youtube.com/milkenaward](https://www.youtube.com/milkenaward) and  
[www.instagram.com/milkenfamilyfdn](https://www.instagram.com/milkenfamilyfdn).

For more information, visit

[www.MilkenEducatorAwards.org](https://www.MilkenEducatorAwards.org) or call MFF at (310) 570-4772.

## **About the Milken Educator Awards**

The very first Milken Educator Awards were presented by the Milken Family Foundation in 1987. The Awards provide public recognition and individual financial rewards of \$25,000 to elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and specialists from around the country who are furthering excellence in education. Recipients are heralded in early to mid-career for what they have achieved and for the promise of what they will accomplish.

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**October 18, 2019**

## **MANDI TORREZ OF BERNALILLO PUBLIC SCHOOLS NAMED 2020 NEW MEXICO TEACHER OF THE YEAR**

### ***NEW MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION SECRETARY-DESIGNATE RYAN STEWART MAKES SURPRISE ANNOUNCEMENT AT PLACITAS ELEMENTARY IN PLACITAS***

BERNALILLO—New Mexico Public Education Secretary-Designate Ryan Stewart announced today the selection of Mandi Torrez from Bernalillo Public Schools as the 2020 New Mexico Teacher of the Year. The announcement was made during a visit to Placitas Elementary School, where Ms. Torrez teaches third grade. Secretary-Designate Stewart surprised Ms. Torrez in her classroom, where she was given the award before an audience of students, fellow teachers, district and school administrators and her family.

“Ms. Torrez represents the direction education is taking in New Mexico,” said Secretary-Designate Stewart. “She is an educator focused on cultural responsiveness, inclusivity and

equity. We are all lucky to have a teacher like Ms. Torrez influencing our students, who are the future of New Mexico. I know that she will represent our state well on the national stage as New Mexico Teacher of the Year.”

As the 2020 New Mexico Teacher of the Year (NMTOY), Ms. Torrez will receive a one year paid sabbatical, generously sponsored by the New Mexico Oil and Gas Association (NMOGA), during her tenure from January 1 to December 31, 2020. This will be the first time ever that a full year’s paid sabbatical will be provided to the NMTOY. Ms. Torrez will also receive up to \$10,000 worth of professional development opportunities. Additionally, Ms. Torrez will be invited to join the other state teachers of the year in various exciting opportunities around the country and will compete in the National Teacher of the Year competition.

“NMOGA is proud to support Ms. Torrez as the 2020 New Mexico Teacher of the Year and is appreciative of her efforts in the classroom,” said NMOGA Executive Director Ryan Flynn. “Students and teachers receive more than \$1 billion each year from the oil and gas industry to support New Mexico schools, and NMOGA is excited for the opportunity to sponsor Ms. Torrez’s work throughout the next year.”

Ms. Torrez has been teaching for ten years, eight of which have been spent at Placitas Elementary School. Ms. Torrez is a member of the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics and the National Education Association. She has served on the Placitas Elementary Leadership Team since 2017, and was nominated for the Golden Apple Excellence in Teaching Award in 2017.

“We are very excited that Ms. Torrez has been selected as the New Mexico Teacher of the Year,” said Bernalillo Public Schools Superintendent Keith Cowan. “Her ability to connect with students and family through innovative and culturally responsive best practices earned her the recognition of Teacher of the Year for Bernalillo Public Schools for the 2019-2020 school year. Ms. Torrez is an



exceptional teacher who will be a valuable resource for so many.”

Ms. Torrez’s first work with children was in college, while volunteering at an English as Second Language after-school program in a low-income housing community. Ms. Torrez’s volunteer service was her first look at the achievement gap and the support needed for minority students.

A central component of Ms. Torrez’s teaching is her focus on cultural diversity. Ms. Torrez has worked to highlight cultural awareness at Placitas Elementary by organizing annual celebrations for National Hispanic Heritage Month, Native American Heritage Month and National Black History Month. For National Hispanic Heritage Month, Ms. Torrez has organized family dinners and student art exhibitions, as well as flamenco, ballet folklórico and salsa dancing lessons for students and families. Ms. Torrez is currently pursuing a project to name the hallways in Placitas Elementary after prominent historical figures of color.

Prior to teaching, Ms. Torrez was a journalist for eight years. Ms. Torrez attended the University of Colorado at Boulder, where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Journalism. Ms. Torrez also attended Wheelock College in Boston, MA, where she received a Master of Science degree in Integrated Elementary Education and Special Education.

New Mexico’s Teacher of the Year process is based upon both classroom performance and strength of application. Districts and state charter schools were encouraged to nominate candidates for 2020 Teacher of the Year. The selection committee, consisting of education leaders from across the state, scored 16 Teacher of the Year applications. The top three highest scoring applicants were recommended to Secretary-Designate Stewart, who observed all three finalists in their classrooms before selecting Mandi Torrez as the 2020 NMTOY.

Now in its 56<sup>th</sup> year, the New Mexico Teacher of the Year Program began in 1963. Each year, all 89 New Mexico

school districts and each state charter school is invited to nominate outstanding teachers to become New Mexico's Teacher of the Year. The 2019 New Mexico Teacher of the Year, Jessica Sanders, is now a curriculum coach at Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary in Rio Rancho. Prior to this, Ms. Sanders taught sixth and seventh grade science at Berrendo Middle School in Roswell. Ms. Sanders is involved in the broader education eco-system through her active involvement in coaching sports and her extracurricular involvement in student-led clubs. Ms. Sanders is also President Elect of the New Mexico Science Teachers Association.

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**For Immediate Release**

October 2, 2019

**NEW AUTISM PORTAL TO BENEFIT INDIVIDUALS,  
FAMILIES, EDUCATORS AND PROVIDERS WITH 24/7  
ACCESSIBLE ONLINE RESOURCES**

The New Mexico Public Education Department's Special Education Bureau on Wednesday announced the launch of New Mexico's first-ever Autism Portal, an interactive platform with trainings, archived e-courses and a variety of support resources for autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The portal is a result of collaboration between the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED), the University of New Mexico Center for Development and Disability (UNM CDD), and the Developmental Disabilities Supports Division at the New Mexico Department of Health (DOH).

"The Autism Portal will support not just individuals diagnosed with autism but also families, community members, and educators," said Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart.

Early feedback for the portal was provided by New Mexico families who wanted a single site where they could find the most relevant autism resources and services.

The portal was created under a contract with the DOH – with funds from the issuance of “Autism Awareness License Plates” authorized in 2015 by the state Legislature, pursuant to House Bill 103, Chapter 55, for the purpose of funding autism research, outreach, and education.

The portal highlights an Autism Resource Locator, which will help narrow down resources based on age and other factors, providing users with the most relevant information. The portal provides training to public school educators and covers topics that affect students in preschool through high school. Additionally, the portal offers blog posts on various ASD topics written by UNM CDD staff, providing a way for the community to comment and discuss important ASD topics. The first blog post is **“How is Autism Diagnosed”**.

You may access these resources at the following web sites:

- **Autism Portal**
- **Autism Portal / Training for Educators**

If you require assistance with the Autism Portal for yourself or an individual with ASD, please contact the Autism Family and Provider Resource Team at 1-800-270-1861 or 505-272-1852.

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release: Sept. 26, 2019**

### **THREE NEW MEXICO SCHOOLS RECEIVE NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON RECOGNITION**

#### ***SCHOOLS RECOGNIZED FOR EXCELLENCE WITH 2019 U.S. BLUE RIBBON AWARDS***

**SANTA FE, NM** – Three New Mexico schools have received one of the highest national honors for improving student outcomes and closing achievement gaps, New Mexico Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart, Ed. L.D., announced today. The U.S. Department of Education has given the National Blue Ribbon School award to Career

Enrichment Center & Early College Academy in Albuquerque, Ladera Del Norte Elementary in Farmington, and Logan Elementary in Logan.

“On behalf of the Public Education Department and the State of New Mexico, I want to congratulate the students, faculty, staff and administration at all three of these incredible schools,” Secretary Stewart said. “We are proud to hold them up as exemplars of what all public education institutions should strive for and will continue to support the amazing work they do on a daily basis.”

Schools are recognized in two categories: Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools and Exemplary High Performing Schools. This year, Career Enrichment Center & Early College Academy and Logan Elementary were honored in the Exemplary High Performing Schools category. Ladera Elementary was honored in the Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools category.

“I am so very proud of our elementary students and staff,” said Logan Superintendent Dennis Roch. “I’m especially gratified that this award recognizes the strong history of achievement our school is known for.”

To qualify for the Blue Ribbon award, schools are required to demonstrate dramatic progress in student achievement growth or show overall academic excellence. After being nominated by NMPED, each school submits an application to the U.S. Department of Education for consideration and review. Schools recognized in the Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools category are among their state’s highest performing schools in closing achievement gaps between a school’s student groups and all students. Schools recognized in the Exemplary High Performing Schools category are among their state’s highest performing schools as measured by state assessments or nationally normed tests.

Since 1982, the U.S. Department of Education has invited annual National Blue Ribbon School nominations from state

education agencies and top education officials. A total of 420 schools nationwide may be nominated, with awards determined by the number of K-12 students and schools in each state or jurisdiction. Now in its 37<sup>th</sup> year, the national Blue Ribbon Schools program has bestowed recognition on more than 9,000 schools. Secretary Betsy DeVos and the Department of Education will celebrate all 2019 honorees at an awards ceremony on November 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> in Washington D.C.

Photographs and brief descriptions of the 2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools are available at <https://www.ed.gov/nationalblueribbonschools>.

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## **News Release**

**For Immediate Release:** September 19, 2019

### **IN SUPPORT OF NEW MEXICO OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP, NEW MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT SETS FAFSA COMPLETION GOAL OF 80%**

**SANTA FE, NM** – Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart on Thursday announced a new Public Education Department initiative to increase the annual statewide FAFSA completion rate to 80%. This goal is designed to support Governor Lujan Grisham's recently announced New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship.

The New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship is Governor Lujan Grisham's bold vision for increasing college access for New Mexico's students. This innovative plan to set the national standard for college affordability will change the life outcomes for tens of thousands of students, both now and well into the future. The New Mexico Public Education Department and New Mexico public schools will play a pivotal role in ensuring that the state utilizes every possible dollar to reach all of New Mexico's aspiring college students.

The most impactful way K-12 schools can contribute to the financial sustainability of this program is to increase the

FAFSA participation rate for high school students. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the form that the federal government, states, colleges and other organizations use to award financial aid. Submitting it is a student's key to accessing grants, scholarships, work-study programs and federal student loans. Currently, about 65% of New Mexico's high school students complete the FAFSA. At this rate, thousands of our students are missing out on potential federal funds that would make college significantly more affordable.

"By coming together to increase our FAFSA completion rates, we are seeding the soil that will produce thousands more doctors, computer scientists, authors, architects, nurses, artists, and teachers across our state," said Secretary Stewart. "For thousands of students, we will make possible a college experience that breaks a generational cycle of poverty. Together, we are delivering on the moonshot for our children."

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## **JOINT MEDIA RELEASE**

September 4, 2019

### **NEW MEXICO GOVERNOR'S STEM CHALLENGE CONFIRMS 600+ PARTICIPANTS**

(Albuquerque, NM) –Sixty-five New Mexico (NM) high schools have created student teams to imagine, design, and develop a technological solution for the 2019-20 New Mexico Governor's STEM Challenge. These 600+ students capture a geographic diversity that reaches all corners of NM. Over 30 school districts are represented, both urban and rural, including Albuquerque, Belen, Capitan, Chama, Deming, Eunice, Farmington, Gadsden, Grady, Las Cruces, Los Lunas, Raton, Roswell, Santa Fe, San Jon, Silver City, and Gallup-McKinley.

The STEM Challenge structure is simple: over the course of the semester, these ten-person student teams will create a prototype/model that solves a real-world problem in

response to the Challenge theme, *Keeping the World Safer Using Technology*. Partnered NM industry employers will evaluate the proposed solutions based on quality and demonstration of skills required for STEM careers in NM. The top teams will receive \$5000 and present at the Statewide Showcase held December 7, 2019 at Los Lunas High School.

“We are thrilled to see schools participating from around the state, giving the STEM Challenge a diversity that is absolutely necessary to accomplish our mission of showing students that if they study hard in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, they can get great jobs right here in New Mexico,” said Secretary Bill McCamley from the NM Department of Workforce Solutions.

Teachers championing the teams will integrate the Challenge theme with the NM STEM Ready! Science Standards as a co-curricular learning tool for everyday classroom activities. These mentor teachers will also receive funds for materials, a stipend, and professional learning through the NM Public Education Department. Each participating student is eligible to receive an NMAA Varsity letter, the same award given to student athletes on a varsity sports team.

“Los Alamos National Laboratory is excited to support the STEM Challenge. The competition is a win-win that both encourages New Mexican students in STEM fields, and will help meet future workforce needs of the Laboratory and the state,” said LANL Director Thom Mason.

New Mexico State University has coordinated undergraduate mentors from its institution as well as Northern New Mexico College and the University of New Mexico to advise and support student teams.

“STEM education is so meaningful for our students, not only because it provides a high skill set, the ability to think critically and work collaboratively in teams, and engage in relevant work, but because of its bond with workforce and

economic development,” said Deputy Secretary Gwen Perea Warniment from the NM Public Education Department. “I am thrilled by the numbers of schools and districts participating. Students and educators across New Mexico have answered the call for purposeful, engaging, and challenging learning that is called for by the Next Generation Science Standards.”

The 2019-20 NM Governor’s STEM Challenge is coordinated by the NM Department of Workforce Solutions, the NM Public Education Department, and Los Alamos National Laboratory.

Sponsoring companies partnered with the STEM Challenge include:

Chevron

Decartes Labs

Deloitte

El Paso Electric

Facebook

Freeport McMoRan

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Meow Wolf

N3B

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Aug. 12, 2019

**GOV. NAMES EDUCATION SECRETARY**

**SANTA FE** – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Monday announced the new secretary of the New Mexico Public Education Department, Ryan Stewart.

Surrounded by the education agency's deputy secretaries, a diverse cohort of deeply experienced New Mexico educators and administrators, Lujan Grisham touted Stewart's work as an educator and reformer in California and Pennsylvania at a Capitol news conference.

"I'm thrilled to introduce Secretary Stewart to New Mexico," Gov. Lujan Grisham said. "It's no secret I have very high expectations for the Public Education Department; they are as high as can be, frankly, because I share New Mexicans' sense of urgency about our schools, and it's our responsibility to deliver the transformation our students and schools deserve. I believe Ryan is the man for this moment. I'm certain educators, superintendents, parents, legislators and stakeholders will be struck by his energy and vision, as I was, and I'm further certain New Mexico public school students will greatly benefit from the turnaround he will oversee. I'm eager for him to get started."

Stewart, an educator with diverse classroom and leadership experience in public education and education reform, is executive director of the Partners in School Innovation mid-Atlantic region, based in Philadelphia. Partners in School Innovation is a leading national nonprofit dedicated to boosting educational opportunities and outcomes for low-income students of color. Stewart was previously executive director of the Office of School Improvement and Innovation at the School District of Philadelphia, the eighth-largest school district in the U.S., where he also served as

special assistant to the superintendent, leading the district's principal effectiveness efforts and identifying methods to increase the transparency, equity, and strategic alignment of the district's school funding model

He also worked as lead mentor at the nonprofit New Teacher Center, advising new educators, particularly middle school math and science teachers, as well as principals and district personnel on professional development and data analysis. Stewart was an algebra and science teacher at Cesar Chavez Academy, part of the Ravenswood City School District in East Palo Alto, Calif. Among various fellowships and professional activities, Stewart served on the board of the Council on African American Affairs, now the Ron Brown Scholar Community Service Foundation, a Washington-based think tank emphasizing system issues facing African American communities. Stewart earned his bachelor's degree in economics from Stanford University and his doctorate in education leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

"New Mexico right now is synonymous with opportunity," said Stewart. "Already, I am awed by the collective sense of buy-in, by the excitement permeating the state's public education ecosystem, everyone's evident willingness to come together to solve the challenges we face. We'll take on those challenges without fear. I'm humbled by the chance to do this work in this incredible state, and I look forward to meeting with the students, the top-flight educators, the dedicated unions and school administrators. Together, I know we will make the difference New Mexicans expect and deserve."

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## **News Release**

**For Immediate Release:** August 6, 2019

### **NEW MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT SEEKS TEACHER MENTORS FOR GOVERNOR'S 2019-20 STEM CHALLENGE AND SHOWCASE**

**SANTA FE, NM** – As New Mexico schools are preparing for the 2019-20 academic year, the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) is reaching out to high school science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) educators to encourage participation in the first-ever Governor's STEM Challenge and Showcase.

Over the course of the 2019 summer break, the PED contacted principals and superintendents in all 89 school districts and charter school directors across the state to share information about this exciting opportunity for New Mexico's students.

Schools wishing to register a student team for the Governor's 2019-20 STEM Challenge and Showcase must do so before the August 30<sup>th</sup> deadline. Registration is available through the following link:

**<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NMSTEMShowcase>**

Teachers mentoring student teams will receive a stipend of \$500. Mentor teachers will receive support in the form of a two-day weekend workshop in September about the STEM Showcase criteria and how to incorporate the required NM STEM Ready! Science Standards into their classroom work. Weekly online support for teacher mentors will also be available, in addition to reimbursement for materials. Through a partnership between New Mexico State University and Northern New Mexico College, technical mentors will be available for student teams.

Detailed information on the Challenge is available on the program page located on the NM PED's Math and Science Bureau's website and through the LANL Community Partnerships Office's website:

**<https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/math-science/governors-stem-showcase/>**

**<https://www.lanl.gov/community/education/stem-challenge/index.php>**

“We want New Mexico’s students to be future leaders, problem solvers, and innovators,” said Gwen Warniment, PED Deputy Secretary of Teaching, Learning and Assessment. “Our state’s unique role in the STEM industry provides us an opportunity to set students on the right path early on towards career success in STEM fields. This is why it is essential that teachers involve their students in the Challenge.”

The Governor’s 2019-20 STEM Challenge and Showcase is the result of collaboration between the New Mexico Public Education Department, the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions and Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). The Challenge will recognize student achievement in STEM and help NM’s diverse student population recognize the potential that STEM jobs have to address local, state, and global challenges.

The Challenge calls for students in NM high school STEM classes to imagine, design, and develop a project model to address the following Challenge theme formulated by LANL: Keeping the World Safer Using Technology.

Project model plans/prototypes must be submitted to the Statewide STEM Showcase Coordinator, Anjeli Doty (adoty@lanl.gov) by 11:59 pm on Friday, November 22, 2019, in order to be considered for the Showcase.

A group of STEM industry representatives will select projects to invite to the Showcase on December 7, 2019 in Los Lunas, NM. Participating New Mexico STEM employers will judge submissions based on the quality of the work and the degree to which the project uses skills required by New Mexico STEM businesses. The employers will provide an award of \$5,000 to the winning team (\$500 per student). All student participants in the Challenge will receive an NMAA Varsity letter – the same award student athletes receive when they participate on a Varsity sports team.

Schools accepting the Challenge will utilize LANL’s theme as a co-curricular learning tool and case study in their STEM

class curricula. Though all STEM classrooms may participate, schools will choose a team of up to ten students working with up to two mentor teachers to submit a proposed solution. Students will practice their collaborative problem solving and presentation skills while learning how to use science and engineering practices to construct project models to present information and evaluate solutions.

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: July 26, 2019

### **NMPED ANNOUNCES STATEWIDE MATHEMATICS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

**SANTA FE, NM** – The New Mexico Standards Based Transition Assessment of Math and English Language Arts (TAMELA) was administered this past spring in response to Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham’s January executive order directing the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) to begin transitioning away from the *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test*.

The Spring 2019 Transition Assessment of Math and English Language Arts decreased time spent on testing for students by 30 percent while maintaining comparable results to last year’s assessment. Statewide English Language Arts proficiency rates increased in 2019, with nearly 33 percent of students demonstrating proficiency. Mathematics proficiencies have hovered around 20 percent since 2015. These results reinforce the governor’s call for a transformation of the education system in New Mexico. The NMPED is dedicated to providing the appropriate levels of support and resources to partner with districts and communities in this work. Spring academic achievement data can be found on the NMPED’s Accountability web page at:

**<https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/accountability/achievement-data/>**

### ***Stakeholder Feedback and Vision for the Future of Assessment in New Mexico***

Over the past few months, the NMPED has held a series of community conversations across New Mexico to listen to stakeholders regarding the vision for the future assessment system. As a result, a Student Success Task Force was established to help identify priorities. The priorities include ensuring

- **culturally relevant, custom-developed assessments** in grades 3–8 without increasing testing time and while maintaining comparability;
- a **college entrance exam** for all students at grade 11;
- a more **balanced approach to measuring student learning** that encourages the use of local classroom and district level assessments; and
- **assessment literacy** for multiple stakeholders.

This fall, the NMPED and the Student Success Task Force will be submitting a full statewide multi-year assessment plan to the Governor’s Office.

As recommended by the taskforce, the Spring 2020 math and ELA assessment in grades 3–8 will use the same blueprint as Spring 2019, with the addition of custom-developed field test items. New Mexico will continue including additional locally-developed, high-quality items

each year as the assessment continues its transformation. The NMPED applauds the efforts undertaken by educators and schools to maintain high-quality instruction aligned to our state adopted standards during the transition year.

The NMPED recognizes that proficiency in math and English Language Arts is a core function of public education and an inherent civil right. The Department looks forward to engaging with New Mexico communities over the next school year on the Profile of New Mexico Graduate Project, where local communities can begin to articulate what a diploma means to their community, above and beyond academic indicators and test scores.

Page last updated December 17, 2020

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