



ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

APS STRONG

LEGISLATIVE
AGENDA
2025

LIST OF APS PRIORITIES

FUNDING FOR INNOVATIVE DISTRICT PROGRAMS
\$667,000 PER "PRIORITY" OR "EMERGING" ELEMENTARY

ABOVE-THE-LINE FUNDING

PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT, RETENTION,
PREPARATION, AND COMPENSATION
\$5 MILLION

FUNDING FOR ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION
\$950,000

PERSONAL FINANCE REQUIRED FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION
SCHOOL BUS ROUTES

FUNDING FOR INNOVATIVE DISTRICT PROGRAMS

In 2018, the New Mexico Public Education Department identified three APS elementary schools – Hawthorne, Los Padillas, and Whittier – as needing more rigorous intervention due to low performance.

In response, APS created a transformational framework to support the needs of these schools.

The three main components of this framework were extended day, extended year, and increased investment in human capital. These schools, now known as Transformational Opportunity Pilot Schools (TOPS), are a model for effective implementation of extended learning time. Instead of simply adding more days to the school year, APS transformed extended learning to include embedded time for school-wide enrichment, personalization, and acceleration. Professional development was also transformed to target student needs and empower teachers. Additionally, the district enlisted the support of interventionists, coaches, community school coordinators and mentors to support the work of TOPS educators – providing more muscle to an effort that seeks to improve student achievement in a more uniform manner.

Today, APS supports 21 TOPS schools serving more than 5,400 students and is seeking funding to continue and expand the program, which includes resources such as transformational coaches, supplies for Genius Hour, and support for teachers pursuing National Board Certification.

The continued investment in this effort, such as professional development time for teachers and additional staffing, is necessary to ensure the continuity and long-term success of these innovative programs and the related progress in student engagement and attendance.

APS respectfully requests \$667,000 per elementary school designated as “priority” or “emerging” under the district’s performance framework.

ABOVE-THE-LINE FUNDING

The TOPS model illustrates why school districts throughout the state, including APS, request the state prioritize funding for the State Equalization Guarantee (SEG) and avoid “below-the-line” funding for specific projects that may not be proven, sustainable or in alignment with a district’s goals and strategic priorities.

Providing all districts, not just ours, with the autonomy to allocate resources for initiatives such as Genius Hour with minimal restrictions would enable us to foster innovative educational practices – and further engage students at schools working to move the needle. Moreover, allowing districts to invest in additional professional development for our educators will significantly enhance classroom effectiveness.

Increased flexibility in funding comes with a heightened sense of responsibility. If granted greater funding flexibility, we can also provide improved accountability measures. The traditional approach, which often includes numerous stipulations and stringent regulations, has constrained our ability to demonstrate our effectiveness. In the past, we could assert, “We were unable to utilize those funds where they were most needed due to restrictions imposed by the Public Education Department.” This limitation would be alleviated if districts were provided with a strategic means to allocate resources toward programs that enhance instructional quality.

PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, PREPARATION, AND COMPENSATION

New Mexico is facing challenges in recruiting and retaining experienced teachers and other licensed and non-licensed providers. All are essential for providing comprehensive support and programs for students. The state must prioritize both increasing tier levels for teacher salaries and retaining experienced teachers – particularly special education teachers. It also must ensure adequate and continued funding for all school personnel to provide competitive compensation that is in line with regional standards.

Teachers who are well-prepared stay in the profession longer and are more successful in helping students achieve. Sufficient funding of teacher residency programs is critical as the number of teachers in the traditional pipeline continues to decline. APS advocates for legislative action to guarantee that all public school employees receive the necessary training, benefits, and compensation needed for competitive employment. Teacher residency programs, bilingual residency programs, increased benefits funding and “grow your own” programs are necessary to provide qualified educators with the skills and support they need.

APS respectfully requests: \$5 Million

FUNDING FOR ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION

Students who experience homelessness or have been placed in foster care undergo significant disruption to their personal lives. Allowing them to stay at their home schools during these transitions is a way to provide continuity and consistency, which in turn increases opportunities to succeed academically. APS is committed to providing transportation to these students' home schools, thus improving their access to a stable and nurturing environment. This school year, more students qualify for the McKinney-Vento Program than last year, leading to a greater need for transportation and additional funding.

The Homeless Children and Youth subgrant specifies these funds cannot be used for transportation; therefore, it does not cover the total cost of alternative transportation. A direct appropriation to the district for transportation of Title I students using our existing RFPs with transportation vendors will enable the district to contract alternative transportation services for these children and allow them to remain at their home schools.

**APS respectfully requests \$950,000 to
cover the cost in FY26.**

PERSONAL FINANCE REQUIRED FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

Equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the complexities of personal finance and financial security has never been more critical. As a result, the number of states requiring personal finance courses has increased from eight in 2020 to 26 in 2024. Such courses empower students with financial independence, prepare them for real-world challenges, foster critical thinking and problem-solving, and promote financial responsibility.

Personal Finance has a positive long-term impact on improving credit scores, lowering loan delinquency rates, and reducing default rates. It also increases the likelihood that future generations will maintain three months of savings for emergencies and have at least one type of retirement account. In fact, completing a one-semester course in personal finance can result in a lifetime benefit of roughly \$100,000 per student. Much of that financial value comes from learning how to avoid high-interest credit card debt and leveraging better credit scores to secure preferential borrowing rates for key expenses, such as insurance, auto loans, and home mortgages. APS supports allowing districts to have the option to replace the half-credit Economics classes with a Personal Finance class as a requirement for high school graduation.

SCHOOL BUS ROUTES

Transportation to school is a crucial aspect of ensuring equal access to public education. Currently, APS serves about 33,000 students each day, but state law only mandates transportation for elementary students within a one-mile radius, middle schoolers within one-and-a-half miles, and high schoolers within two miles. This leaves many students ineligible for bus rides, forcing them to either find a ride or walk to school.

For those who walk, this often means covering distances of more than a mile to and from school, sometimes through busy roads or unsafe neighborhoods.

This situation poses significant safety risks and can affect attendance and overall student well-being. We believe New Mexico state law should allow bus service for any student who wants or needs it, regardless of distance. Such an initiative would allow districts to enhance safety, improve attendance and provide reliable transportation options for more students.

Additionally, this change would offer parents a safer, more economical way to get their children to school. Addressing these transportation challenges is essential for creating a safer and more equitable environment for all students.

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