NEWS RELEASES

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

July 2, 2021

NEARLY 16,000 NM STUDENTS GOT FREE ACADEMIC COACHING LAST YEAR

REPORT: STUDENTS AVERAGED 35.5 COACHING SESSIONS EACH

SANTA FE – A Public Education Department program to prevent students from slipping through the cracks during the pandemic provided free academic coaching to nearly

16,000 students over the last year, and 71% of high school seniors in the program graduated.

A report released Thursday (attached) also said that since the ENGAGE New Mexico program began in spring 2020:

- 38,515 students were referred by educators or families
- 22,806 families responded to outreach
- 15,883 families accepted academic coaching
- The average was 35.5 coaching sessions per student.

“This program was vital to helping New Mexico students conquer the obstacles that prevented them from learning during the pandemic,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “With an academic coach to help them, these students improved their grades and attendance just as we expected.”

The Public Education Department contracted with Graduation Alliance early in the pandemic to operate ENGAGE New Mexico with a focus on re-enrolling high school students who had disengaged from school as a result of the pandemic, were chronically absent, were considered academically at risk, were homeless or in foster care, or who requested additional support.

The program continued to expand over the pandemic year and eventually served students from kindergarten through 12th grade.

“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. It makes perfect sense that some families needed help during this transition,” said Deputy Secretary Gwen Perea Warniment, who oversaw the program.

Of New Mexico’s 187 districts and state-chartered schools, 134 opted in to the program and referred a total of 38,515 students over the year. ENGAGE New Mexico workers reached out to those families by phone, email, text, social media and U.S. mail offering academic coaching. Almost

70% of those who responded to that outreach accepted coaching.

Students who opted-in to coaching were asked a series of questions to help outreach counselors assign them to the appropriate intervention support level:

- Level 1 for students with a single identified barrier that could be resolved by a single intervention. 14.7% of students were placed in level 1.
- Level 2 for students with home support but multiple barriers. 26.8% of students were placed in level 2.
- Level 3 for students with significant, on-going barriers that could require as much as daily intervention. 58.5% of students were placed in level 3.

The questions determined that 17% of sixth to 12th graders in the program lacked adult engagement in their school work, and 18% had responsibilities caring for siblings; 36% of 11th and 12th graders in the program had commitments outside of school, and 49% of families in the program with students in kindergarten through 5th grade didn't know how to use educational technology.

"New Mexico led the nation in recognizing the need for additional supports for students and families and committed the resources required to ensure every student and family who wanted assistance had it," said Rebekah Richards, co-founder and chief strategy officer for Graduation Alliance, a national company that partners with government agencies and educators across the U.S. to recruit, re-enroll, educate and mentor students.

ENGAGE New Mexico had no access to attendance and grade data for the students who got coaching. Instead, it conducted surveys of districts, parents and students to gauge the program's success. Survey results indicated high percentages of each group reported that participating students had maintained or increased engagement in school:

- 96% of districts

- 91% of parents
- 92% of participating 6th through 12th graders

Additionally, 91% of participating 6th through 12th graders reported they had either maintained or improved their grades, and districts reported a 71% graduation rate for participating seniors. The report summarizes Graduation Alliance's yearlong, $3 million contract.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

July 1, 2021

PED DEVELOPS COMPUTER SCIENCE STRATEGIC PLAN

K-12 COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION TO BECOME A PRIORITY BY 2026

SANTA FE – The Public Education Department has created a five-year plan to ensure that New Mexico students learn the computer skills they need to participate as digital citizens and contribute to New Mexico's economy.

The New Mexico Computer Science Strategic Plan (attached) is an outgrowth of Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's goal to expand and promote student pathways into careers in science, technology, engineering and math, and a recognition that computer skills are essential in those and every other 21st century career field.

"Computer science is a vital part of each student's educational pathway," Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. "Through this strategic plan, our department will prioritize K-12 computer science education so all of our students are empowered to develop the skills necessary to contribute to New Mexico's growing STEM economy."

By 2026, computer science education will be a priority in K-12 public schools to improve students' computational thinking, skills and literacy.

The plan outlines specific policy, implementation and educator development goals and a timeline to achieve them. For example:

- By 2026, teachers will have a pathway to earn a computer science endorsement.
- By 2026, 50% of districts and charter schools will have their own K–12 computer science implementation plan.
- By 2023, every high school will offer a secondary computer science course.
- By 2026, teachers will be offered ongoing professional learning to integrate computer science in K-8 classes.

To ensure a commitment to the strategic plan, the PED will develop and administer a comprehensive needs assessment to various stakeholder groups, then collect and analyze data. The PED will revisit and update the strategic plan annually to inform stakeholders of progress toward meeting the goals.

A computer science taskforce was convened in the fall of 2019 to identify the vision and mission and outline the strategic plan. The task-force included individuals from across New Mexico who are invested in the improvement of computer science for the state's students. It included pre-K-20 educators, students, legislators, industry partners and professional organizations.

The group submitted its recommendations to the PED in early 2021, leading to completion of the computer science strategic plan this month.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

June 30, 2021

BLACK EDUCATION ACT TAKES EFFECT JULY 1

STATE TO ESTABLISH REPORTING HOTLINE, EDUCATOR TRAINING, CURRICULUM

SANTA FE – Anti-racism training for educators, culturally inclusive curriculum and a hotline for reporting school-based incidents of racial bias are among the strategies to be implemented in the coming school year to meet requirements of the Black Education Act, which takes effect July 1.

“For too long, the needs of Black students in New Mexico have not been adequately recognized or supported. We are very grateful to the legislature and the governor for elevating this longstanding need to the level of statute and giving it teeth,” said Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart, the first Black person to serve as New Mexico’s chief school officer. “This legislation sets clear expectations and provides training and accountability. It also makes explicitly clear that racism will never be tolerated in New Mexico’s public schools. Period.”

The law also requires:

- Anti-racism policies in every district and state-chartered school;
- An advisory council to advise the secretary, districts and schools on ways to improve public school education for Black students;
- A liaison within the Public Education Department to coordinate this work;
- An annual report to the governor and legislature on progress.

The legislation, House Bill 43, was co-sponsored by Rep. Sheryl Williams Stapleton and Sen. Harold Pope, both of Albuquerque.

“I introduced this legislation because Black students in New Mexico are lagging desperately in school achievement,” Rep. Stapleton said. “The national trend shows that gap is widening since the pandemic, so I thought it was time to do something about it.”

Implementation planning began immediately after Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed the measure into law on April 5. Already, the department has built a list of possible advisory council members.

“I want to have a fully approved, fully functioning council before the end of July. I may not hit the exact targeted deadline, but that’s absolutely what I will work hard to do,” said Deputy Secretary Vickie Bannerman, who is overseeing the work.

Dr. Bannerman has also completed paperwork to create four new positions within the Public Education Department: a Black education liaison, a professional development/training coordinator; a curriculum coordinator; and a hotline manager.

“This is year one, and our goal is to plan, develop and implement what we can. I don’t want a fast failure. I’d rather take the time to build it well so it’s sustainable,” Dr. Bannerman said.

The advisory council, which may have up to 23 members, will advise the secretary, school districts and charter schools on ways to improve public school education for Black students, increase Black parent involvement and increase the number of Black high school graduates who succeed in college or in professional or vocational training.

The state also has Indian Education, Hispanic Education and Bilingual Multicultural Education advisory councils.

The 2020 four-year graduation rate for Black students in New Mexico was 74%, 3 points below the state average and 7 points below the average for white students.

“The gaps in educational attainment for Black students were a source of concern as well as activism for years in New Mexico Black communities,” said Amy Whitfield, executive director of the New Mexico Office of African American Affairs. “We know this legislation will have a real impact by increasing equity in our schools. I’m grateful that the Public Education Department has included so many community leaders and experts in preparing to implement the Black Education Act, with the foundation being Black children and families.”

The legislation also calls for New Mexico’s Public Education and Higher Education departments to cooperate in developing programs and instructional materials that recognize and teach Black culture and anti-racism, and that seek to improve job opportunities for Black New Mexicans in public and higher education. This will be in coordination with New Mexico’s public colleges and universities.

“We are committed to ensuring equitable representation for Black students and educators in classrooms and course materials at all levels in New Mexico,” said Higher Education Secretary Stephanie Rodriguez. “We look forward to collaborating with our partners at the secondary and postsecondary levels, and with community leaders as we work to bring the Black Education Act to fruition.”

Hiring the liaison is a critical early step because that person will help develop and implement a five-year strategic plan for public elementary and secondary education of Black students and manage the work of the other three team members.

The law requires all school personnel to participate in annual anti-racism training. For this first year, most districts will meet the requirement through existing programs, but eventually, the training coordinator will develop a New Mexico-specific program.

The hotline manager will develop guidance and standards for operating a hotline that the public can use to report

incidents of racism, injustice or discrimination against anyone — not just Black students — in a school setting. The hotline should be up and running by January, Dr. Bannerman said.

With the council, the liaison also will produce reports on current research and best practices to address the Black student achievement gap and to combat discrimination and racism in the public school system.

The liaison also will prepare an annual status report, due to the governor and legislature no later than Nov. 15 each year. That report will include — for both K-12 and higher education — data by ethnicity on enrollment, student achievement, attendance and truancy, and licensed school employees or faculty.

New Mexico's population is about 2% Black, but that small percentage is irrelevant to the need.

"Racism is a problem in our schools. I've seen it. I've experienced it," Dr. Bannerman said. "So whether we have one or 1 million, this is needed. Every child deserves a quality education with the same access to opportunities and equity. We will not sacrifice equity, inclusion, representation or quality based on quantity."

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

June 28, 2021

FOUR MORE TO SERVE ON LOS LUNAS GOVERNING COMMITTEE

APPOINTEES NOW REPRESENT ALL AREAS OF THE DISTRICT

SANTA FE — Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart today announced four additional designees to assume temporary

governance of Los Lunas Schools, with every area of the district now represented:

- Tina Garcia, a retired magistrate judge, former county clerk and resident of District 1
- Jessie Lewis, a landscape architect and resident of District 3
- Ragon Espinoza, a behavioral health care provider and resident of District 4
- Bruce Bennett, a retired educational assistant and coach and former vice president of the National Education Association-New Mexico and a resident of District 5.

They join former Los Lunas School Board member Sonya C'Moya, who was designated on May 28 and lives in District 2.

"It's great to have this many highly qualified citizens who are willing to step in and do the important work of governing the Los Lunas Schools in this time of need," Stewart said. "These outstanding individuals will ensure that the district has the responsible and representative governance it needs to keep the district focused on the needs of students."

"Today, Los Lunas Schools welcomes the newly appointed members to the governing committee," Superintendent Arsenio Romero said. "I want to thank all of them for stepping up and helping to lead this amazing school district, and I look forward to working with each of them. As we move forward, we will have the opportunity to improve teaching and learning for all students in the school district."

Stewart indefinitely suspended the district's five-member elected board on May 26 due to credible evidence that certain members persistently violated procurement and public access laws, the state Public School Code, and professional ethical standards. The offices of the state auditor and state police are investigating.

Per state statute, the secretary has authority to remove an entire school board but not individual members.

One member of the ousted board, David Vickers, was among the 24 Los Lunas residents to express interest in serving as a secretary's designee on the governing committee. Had he been designated to serve on the governing committee, the appointment would have been delayed pending a public hearing on the board suspension and a ruling by the hearing officer. Stewart said he didn't want that delay.

"At this stage, we have no reason to believe anything other than the fact that David Vickers has been an upstanding public servant, and I hope he runs again in the future," Stewart said.

Following the elected board's suspension, Superintendent Romero began reporting directly to Stewart until the secretary could delegate that responsibility. When Stewart designated C'Moya, he announced his intention to designate others and requested letters of interest from Los Lunas residents. He received 24 letters and interviewed eight people.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

June 25, 2021

PED LAUNCHES PROGRAM TO GET STUDENTS CONNECTED

NEW MEXICO STUDENT CONNECT WILL HELP FAMILIES ACCESS AVAILABLE ASSISTANCE

SANTA FE – The Public Education Department has launched a program to help thousands of New Mexico students quickly get the digital connections they need by accessing available federal assistance.

The **New Mexico Student Connect program** is part of a broader strategy to make reliable, high-speed internet and digital devices universally available for public education, even in areas with no internet infrastructure.

“Since the pandemic started, we have been investing in and supporting the rapid deployment of digital devices and internet connections. By the time the new school year starts, we will have used every resource available to make sure that every student in the state has what they need to participate, not only in the remote learning program, but also in the many other ways we use technology for learning,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “We are getting people connected and closing the digital divide.”

The **New Mexico Student Connect** program, operated on PED’s behalf by broadband consultant CTC Technology and Energy, has already made calls to 1,000 students and families to see if they have high-speed internet and digital devices and know about the **Emergency Broadband Benefit** program. That federal program offers eligible households a $50 per month credit on broadband internet service from participating providers ($75 a month for households on tribal land), and a one-time $100 credit for the purchase of a computer or laptop.

That outreach will bring millions of federal dollars to New Mexico to help bridge the digital divide.

Congress appropriated $3.2 billion to create the Emergency Broadband Benefit as part of a nearly $900 billion COVID-19 relief package passed in December 2020. The benefit is paid directly to internet service eligible providers and appears as a credit on the participant’s bill.

New Mexico Student Connect will help families apply for that benefit during direct outreach, or families can contact a help desk — by phone at 1-888-723-4505 (toll free) or **online** — for support with connectivity issues. The help

desk currently offers support in English and Spanish, with plans to quickly add Diné (Navajo) and Zuni.

New Mexico Student Connect is starting its efforts by working with the 23 focus groups identified in the landmark Yazzie-Martinez consolidated lawsuit. Those districts are Alamogordo, Albuquerque, Bernalillo, Cuba, Española, Gadsden, Gallup-McKinley, Grants-Cibola, Hatch, Jemez Valley, Lake Arthur, Las Cruces, Los Lunas, Magdalena, Moriarty-Edgewood, Peñasco, Pojoaque, Rio Rancho, Santa Fe, Silver City, Taos, Tucumcari and Zuni. The effort will expand to other districts in the near future.

On April 30, 1st Judicial District Judge Matthew J. Wilson reaffirmed the urgency of the need to get students connected by ruling that the state must immediately determine the need for digital devices and connectivity for at-risk students and their teachers, and to ensure this technology is supplied to any student in those districts needing them. On May 18, **the judge entered a written order** applying his ruling to the 23 focus districts.

The Public Education Department began collecting that data on May 6 through a digital survey for those who could complete it and through school district data-sharing elsewhere. The information arrived in various formats that the PED has compiled into a single database.

Preliminary analysis indicates that almost 40,000 of about 199,000 students (20%) enrolled in the focus districts lack broadband internet service at home and about 12,000 (6%) lack the technological tools they need for successful learning despite public, private and nonprofit efforts throughout the pandemic to close the digital divide.

The PED continues analyzing the data to determine digital access for the entire state — not just the focus districts.

“We’re going beyond the court order and making sure every child in New Mexico has what they need to succeed academically in the digital age,” Stewart said.

CTC is also gearing up to help school districts apply for a second federal program when a 45-day application window opens next week. **The Emergency Connectivity Fund** covers reasonable costs for eligible schools to provide laptop and tablet computers; Wi-Fi hotspots; modems; routers; and broadband connectivity for off-campus use by students and school staff. Schools — not individuals — apply for this funding.

The Emergency Connectivity Fund began with $7.1 billion appropriated through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, a $1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package that was signed into law

March 11. ECT funds will be awarded through the federal E-rate program, which helps make educational technology more affordable.

That program will help provide at least temporary connections for tens of thousands of New Mexico students who live in internet deserts — places where no one has ever laid fiber. Additionally, PED is working with the Department of Information Technology to find longer-term infrastructure options.

“To be clear, this is a network issue not a Public Education Department issue. Nobody has built the broadband network to serve these students,” said Patrick Mulhearn of CTC, which is working with the state to collect data and develop and implement solutions.

The Public Education Department worked throughout the pandemic to expand digital access. That work included distributing 6,282 Chromebooks; providing 102 Cradlepoint wireless routers and adapters; and, in partnership with the Indian Education Division, allocating funds for 101 mobile hotspots and 700 residential hot spots in Indigenous communities.

“This new data shows how much more work remains to really close the digital divide once and for all,” Stewart said.

Contact:

Judy Robinson
judy.robinson@state.nm.us
505-469-5496

Stephanie Montoya
stephanie.montoya@state.nm.us

June 16, 2021

NM LAUNCHES PROGRAM TO HELP FUND EDUCATOR TRAINING

6 TEACHER PREP PROGRAMS APPLIED FOR TEACHER RESIDENCY FUNDING

SANTA FE – The Public Education Department is offering $1 million in competitive grants to higher education institutions to attract and train new K-12 public school teachers in New Mexico.

Five teacher preparation programs applied by Monday's deadline: University of New Mexico, Northern New Mexico College, San Juan College, New Mexico Highlands University and New Mexico State University. Those applications are being reviewed and awards will be announced by June 30.

Colleges and universities receiving the grants will offer students stipends of at least $20,000 per year for participating in the Teacher Residency Program.

“New Mexico needs well trained, professional educators, and this program will help make it affordable for many highly qualified people to get that training and serve in some of our neediest classrooms,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “This is a win-win for public education in New Mexico.”

Before Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham took office, New Mexico had about 740 unfilled teaching positions. Since then, the state’s three education departments have provided funding to support educators and increase the recruitment and retention of bilingual and multicultural teachers, and the number of unfilled positions has dropped to about 570.

“Many of our higher education institutions in New Mexico originated with the mission to prepare educators and serve the diverse communities of our state,” Higher Education Secretary Stephanie Rodriguez said. “Our agency and partners are renewing our commitment to this legacy by expanding the educator pipeline through financial aid programs and increasing recruitment efforts in underrepresented communities.”

The grants will go directly to the higher education institutions, which will use the funding to design, promote and support residency programs to ensure educator diversity and fill high-need teaching positions in the state.

Recipient colleges and universities will establish a relationship with at least one high-needs district early in the program. As part of the residency program, students will co-teach with an expert teacher in such a school.

“It’s invaluable to spend time co-teaching with an expert. You can learn about best practice in a college classroom, but those skills are developed through experience. Guidance in that experience is key to setting the stage for successful teaching,” said Alisa Cooper de Uribe, New Mexico’s 2021 Teacher of the Year.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

June 14, 2021

SCHOOLS CHOSEN FOR FAMILY INCOME INDEX PILOT PROJECT

PED AWARDS $15M TO 108 SCHOOLS TO FIGHT CONCENTRATED POVERTY

SANTA FE – The Public Education Department has allocated $15 million in targeted aid to 108 New Mexico schools based on the new Family Income Index designed to fight concentrated poverty in schools.

This is the first round of funding in a two-year pilot project approved by the Legislature to direct additional aid to schools serving the most economically disadvantaged students. Another $15 million will be distributed to qualifying schools in Fiscal Year 2023.

“Unlike most programs that funnel money through school districts, the Family Income Index gets extra aid directly to the schools that need it most to offset the effects of concentrated poverty,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “Schools will use this extra funding expressly for evidence-based programs known to improve academic outcomes.”

The awards ranged from the legislative minimum of $20,000, received by 13 schools with enrollments of fewer than 50 students, to $434,174 to El Camino Real Community School in Santa Fe, which has 840 students.

Funding was spread across 69 of New Mexico’s 89 districts and 10 of its 98 state-chartered schools. In all, 42% of New Mexico local educational agencies qualified for funding per rules established in the legislative pilot program.

The New Mexico Public Education Department first proposed a Family Income Index in December as a partnership with the Taxation and Revenue and Human Services departments. The goal is to offset known disparities in academic outcomes in schools with concentrated poverty. The Legislature passed it as Senate Bill 17, which Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed on April 5.

The funding must be used for reading and math interventions; hiring school counselors and social workers; creating family information and resource centers; adopting culturally and linguistically diverse classroom texts; offering innovative professional learning opportunities for educators; and after-school enrichment programs.

The project began by using income and Census data to identify the household income of every New Mexico public school student. Next, the Public Education Department calculated each school's Family Income Index, which is the percentage of students in families with extremely low or very low incomes. A family of four earning less than about $34,000 a year would fall into one of those categories.

To allocate the $15 million, PED identified the half of all New Mexico schools with the highest Income Index, effectively creating a list of schools with the highest concentrations of poverty. Any district with at least one school on that list will receive funding for that school; those with multiple schools on the list will receive funding for up to 10% of all district schools. No qualifying school will receive less than $20,000.

As with many awards, schools can begin spending the award after July 1 and then seek reimbursement from the Public Education Department.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

June 11, 2021

PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT SET TO *INSPIRE*

CONFERENCE FOR EDUCATORS, FAMILIES STARTS WEDNESDAY

SANTA FE — After a one-year hiatus due to the global pandemic, the Public Education Department's annual Inspire conference resumes next week in a virtual format, open this year to educators, school staff, families, students and other stakeholders..

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham will kick off the 2021 conference with a welcome speech at 10 a.m. Wednesday (June 16). Keynotes and workshops throughout the four-day event will develop the 2021 conference theme: "AIR: Advocate, Innovate, Renew," with a focus on wellness, special education and advocacy, and opportunities for educator celebration and professional learning.

"This is a time just after the end of the school year for everyone to take a deep breath and think about how we've grown and learned in this pandemic year and how we can use those lessons to better serve every New Mexico student going forward," said Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart, who will give a keynote Thursday afternoon.

Each day's programming has a unique focus, beginning with Wellness Wednesday, which features sessions promoting physical and mental well-being. Thursday's programming is built around a Special Education Summit, during which educators, parents and advocates will discuss issues affecting students with disabilities and learn skills for working with those students.

"As we all know, students with disabilities are general education students first," said Deborah Dominguez-Clark, director of the Special Education Division at the Public Education Department. "We can build on that fact to raise overall expectations across the board for all students."

On Friday morning, 2020 New Mexico Teacher of the Year Mandi Torrez, now the department's teacher liaison, will moderate a packed panel discussion on the future of education in New Mexico. Panelists are Secretary Stewart, state Sen. William Soules, Tracey Cordero of the Indigenous Montessori Institute and vice-chair of the Indian Education Advisory Council, Patricia Jimenez-Latham of Transform Education New Mexico and Hope Morales of Teach Plus New Mexico.

A family engagement leader salon Friday afternoon will bring together stakeholders who are committed to maintaining momentum in their schools and districts to build and strengthen school-home partnerships that promote student success.

Saturday kicks off with a keynote by 2021 New Mexico Teacher of the Year Alisa Cooper de Uribe as the conference winds down to a 1 p.m. closing.

The conference will offer opportunities for stakeholders to cultivate advocacy skills, innovate on existing and best practices, and renew their own spirits with celebrations of the diversity of our communities.

"The Inspire AIR conference will encourage educators and families to see their children and students through a shared lens — a lens through which children are validated for the historical gifts they contribute, the dynamic individuals that they are, and the genius they ignite within as they move through their educational journey," said Katherine Avery, the department's director of strategic outreach and a co-organizer for the conference.

Educators, parents and other family members are especially encouraged to enroll in the virtual conference, which is free and open to all. Registration is required at **BIT.LY/INSPIRE21ENROLL**.

"The goal of the Inspire AIR conference is to promote discussions and catalyze activities around wellness and

healing, equity and inclusion," Avery said.

Workshops will cover both adaptive and technical change in the classroom and provide opportunities for educators and key stakeholders to network, share stories of success, and push one another's thinking and practice in service of all children in New Mexico, with a particular emphasis on students and families most impacted by inequity.

"Many of our children are suffocating in schools. They are stifled by dry, antiquated content that reflects so little of who they are and what they believe," said Deputy Secretary Vickie Bannerman. "Let's be bold and intentional in our equity-focused, student-centered approach to advocacy, innovation, and renewal of our collective belief that because we can do better, we will do better for children."

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

June 8, 2021

PROGRAMS KEEP FAMILIES IN HOMES, STUDENTS IN SCHOOL

PED URGES NM FAMILIES TO APPLY FOR MORTGAGE, RENT, UTILITY HELP

SANTA FE – The Public Education Department is urging eligible New Mexico families to apply for two programs to help pay the mortgage or rent and keep the lights on so children will not be uprooted from their local schools:

- The federal **Emergency Rental Assistance** program was created to reduce evictions or utility service cut-offs due to financial challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The **New Mexico Homeowner Assistance Fund** offers grants of up to $10,000 to maintain housing and reduce

housing cost delinquency related to the pandemic.

“This has been an incredibly difficult year for so many New Mexico families that lost jobs or income due in one way or another to the pandemic,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “We owe it to our children to keep their families intact and in their homes so they can focus, as they should, on their education without fear of being suddenly uprooted.”

Under the Emergency Rental Assistance program, the state of New Mexico is distributing nearly $170 million to pay back, current or future rent and utility bills for eligible families.

Eligible households may receive up to 15 months of assistance plus three additional months — if funding is available — to ensure housing stability. Assistance awards can be used for unpaid, current and future rent and utilities, although priority will be placed on paying past-due rent and utilities.

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program was established by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. In New Mexico, the Department of Finance and Administration has been administering the program since April 5 in partnership with the City of Albuquerque.

Renters across the state are eligible for the program — except for residents of Bernalillo and Doña Ana counties and those who live in a pueblo or tribal area. Those two counties, as well as tribal governments, will administer their own Rental Assistance Programs, which can be accessed through links at **RentHelpNM.org**.

An application for rental assistance may be submitted by either an eligible household or by a landlord on behalf of that eligible household. In general, funds will be paid directly to landlords and utility service providers. If a landlord does not wish to participate, funds may be paid directly to the eligible household.

Landlords and utility providers are encouraged to **download a W9** and submit it to the Department of Finance and Administration via **ERAVendor.Relations@state.nm.us** as soon as possible to ensure a streamlined process for receiving payment.

In addition, the **New Mexico Homeowner Assistance Fund** — a $1 million, six-month pilot program co-sponsored by the state and the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority — was announced this week and is the first state program specifically for homeowners.

The assistance covers past-due and current mortgage payments for income-eligible New Mexicans who have experienced a financial hardship associated with the COVID-19 health crisis.

The New Mexico Homeowner Assistance Fund replaces the COVID-19 Homeowner Assistance Program, which also served homeowners with housing cost assistance payments. The Mortgage Finance Authority will make payments directly to mortgage or loan servicers, escrow companies, or other housing providers. To be eligible for the program, household income must not exceed 100 percent of the area median income.

Applications can be made online at **housingnm.org** or by calling 505.308.4206 or toll-free 866.488.0498 to request a paper application.

More information about both programs, including income eligibility and frequently asked questions, are available on the **Department of Finance and Administration website**.

Other assistance programs available right now to eligible New Mexicans include:

- **Connectivity**: The Emergency Broadband Benefit program provides a $50 monthly credit on the cost of high-speed internet ($75 for households on tribal land) and a one-time credit of $100 to buy a digital device. For more information, including an FAQ and a list of

participating providers: **fcc.gov/emergency-broadband-benefit-program**

- **Health care**: Lower your costs and sign up for health care at Healthcare.gov or call 800-318-2596. If you lost your insurance, get help with the cost of COBRA coverage here: **DOL.gov/general/topic/health-plans/cobra**
- **Food**: Connect with **New Mexico's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program at Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** Students ages 1-18 can also pick up free grab-and-go summer meals at more than 700 sites across New Mexico. Find one near you: **summerfoodnm.org**.
- **Unemployment**: Get an extra $300 per week and unemployment benefits extendeduntil Sept. 6. Sign up at the **New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions**
- **Free COVID-19 vaccine**: Get an appointment for a free shot near you at **vaccinenm.org**. You can also sign up at **vax2themaxnm.org** for a new statewide vaccination incentive program that is offering a total of $10 million in prize money, free travel packages, state parks passes and more.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

June 3, 2021

4TH SCHOOL OUT OF 840 REQUIRED TO CLOSE FOR 14 DAYS

4 RAPID RESPONSES RETURN SANTA ROSA SCHOOL TO REMOTE INSTRUCTION

SANTA FE — Santa Rosa High School, on the last day of the school year, became the fourth of New Mexico's 840 public schools to face a mandatory, 14-day return to remote instruction in the two months following widespread school reentry.

The Public Education Department sent a closure notice Thursday to Santa Rosa High School after it reached four Rapid Responses in 14 days, the state's conservative threshold to prevent spread of COVID-19.

Thursday was the last day of classes at Santa Rosa High, which has about 180 students in grades 9-12. The school has up to seven days to close and then must remain closed for 14 days. The school is required to cease in-person student services, with the exception of small groups in a 5:1 student-teacher ratio.

School leaders were planning to start in-person credit recovery but instead will do that through remote instruction. During the closure period, only students who have tested negative for COVID-19 will be allowed to compete in athletics.

Since widespread school reentry on April 5, three other schools have been required to close:

- April 13: Eldorado High School in Albuquerque
- May 11: Yucca Middle School in Clovis
- May 25: Piedra Vista High School in Farmington

About 40 schools have returned voluntarily to remote instruction temporarily since April 5 in an abundance of caution after a few cases or due to student or staff quarantines as close contacts.

On Wednesday, schools reported only two school-based COVID-19 cases — one involving a staff member and the other a student.

"The number of school-related cases continues to drop, and, as schools move into summer break and more New Mexicans get vaccinated, we fully expect that trend to continue," Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. "Mandatory school closings, although rare, are part of our community safety net, and it's working."

The Rapid Response system, which tracks potential outbreaks at the earliest stages, is part of New Mexico's COVID safety net.

A Rapid Response is one or more positive cases at a school that were infectious while on campus. All cases that a school was notified of on a single day, along with all cases with test dates through the following day, are grouped into a single rapid response. **Read the complete COVID-19 Rapid Response Watchlist here.**

Only the individual school that reaches the four-in-14 threshold is required to return to remote learning. Other schools in the same district are not impacted.

The New Mexico Environment Department keeps track of Rapid Responses based on its own reports and those from other state agencies, including the Public Education Department.

In addition to the closure list, the Environment Department produces a Watchlist of locations with two or more Rapid Responses. On Thursday, 14 New Mexico public schools were on the Watchlist, down from a high of 68 on May 6.

Contact:

NEW MEXICO
Early Childhood
Education & Care Department

Micah McCoy
micah.mccoy@state.nm.us

NEW MEXICO
Public Education Department

Judy Robinson
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

June 3, 2021

SUMMER FOOD PROGRAMS FOR NM KIDS RESUME

MORE THAN 700 LOCATIONS STATEWIDE TO OFFER FREE MEALS FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH

SANTA FE – Free meal programs for children and youth are resuming at more than 700 locations statewide this summer, the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care and Public Education departments announced today.

The two departments work together on summer feeding programs to make sure children and youth from 1 to 18 have access to nutritious meals from June through August.

“These programs fill an important nutrition gap when school-based meal programs go offline for the summer and are an important part of our state’s fight against child hunger,” ECECD Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky said.

“Nutrition needs for growing children don’t end when schools break for the summer,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “Having summer feeding sites across New Mexico ensures students have seamless access to nutrition programs year-round.”

Summer feeding programs are available in almost every community and neighborhood across New Mexico. Each site has been mapped and listed in a searchable format at **summerfoodnm.org**.

More than 70% of New Mexico public school students qualify for free or reduced-price meals during the school year, although that is not a requirement for participating in the summer programs. All children ages 1-18 (as well as those older than 18 with disabilities) can receive free meals through the summer programs.

Additionally:

- No prior registration or enrollment is required for participation.
- In consideration of ongoing safety concerns due to the COVID-19 health emergency, meals will be provided in a “grab-and-go” format.
- Meals at all sites meet U.S. Department of Agriculture nutritional standards.
- Nearly all sites serve lunch, and many serve both breakfast and lunch

The summer feeding programs are funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to fight childhood hunger in a state where 1 in 5 children face food insecurity.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

June 2, 2021

NMPED RELEASES UPDATED SCHOOL REENTRY ROADMAP

EVOLVING DOCUMENT EVOKES BEST PRACTICES, ANSWERS QUESTIONS

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Public Education Department has released a new school reopening roadmap with updated research, guidance and best practices for school leaders at this stage of the global pandemic and with the flexibility to stay current in the next.

Reopening Roadmap 2.0 was developed to help district, charter school and tribal leaders prepare to offer all students a guaranteed, viable, safe, culturally responsive and equitable curriculum and experience during the next school year.

It's a comprehensive update to the previous **Roadmap to Accelerated Learning and Renewal** released in March. Additionally, version 2.0 has moved to a spreadsheet format to allow for interactive work and regular updating as new information becomes available.

"We wanted a document that keeps up as new information emerges and informs new best practices," said Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart. "Reopening Roadmap 2.0 will allow us to share new guidance with school leaders much, much more quickly, and that will help keep our schools safe for our students, educators and communities."

Roadmap 2.0 is divided into eight content sections, each with its own tab. A timeline offers guidance for planning, professional development and assessment tools and other supports. Content was determined through regular meetings with school leaders, who indicated which topics were most urgent:

- Academics
- Budgeting
- Communication and Engagement
- Equity, Language and Culture
- Logistics, Scheduling and Extended Learning
- Special Education
- Staffing
- Student Social and Emotional Learning Supports

"During this time of great uncertainty and unlimited potential for our students, families and educators, engagement with this tool can help facilitate a strong reopening experience," Deputy Secretary Gwen Perea Warniment wrote in the introduction.

Each category includes a topic overview and key steps school leaders can take each month throughout the summer.

The content sections are followed by an FAQ tab and then a list of recent updates to help school leaders quickly determine what has changed. Additionally, the digital

format includes lists and links to supporting documents and resources.

“As superintendents and school leaders look toward fully reopening schools in fall of 2021, it’s been vital to have the opportunity to partner with PED to create a roadmap showing how to get there and how to accelerate learning for students who have unavoidable gaps and get them back on track for graduation,” said Dennis Roch, president of the New Mexico School Superintendents Association.

The Roadmap will be reviewed for school leaders during workshops at the July 19-23 meeting in Albuquerque of the New Mexico Coalition of Educational Leaders.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

May 28, 2021

Editors Note: Ms. C’Moya pronounces her last name as if the apostrophe were a period — C. Moya.

FORMER LOS LUNAS BOARD MEMBER ASSUMES INTERIM ROLE

PED SECRETARY SEEKS NOMINATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL DESIGNEES

SANTA FE — Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart today announced former Los Lunas School Board member Sonya C’Moya as his first designee to assume temporary governance of the school district and called for nominations of others to join her.

Stewart on Wednesday indefinitely suspended the district’s five-member elected board due to credible evidence that certain members have persistently violated procurement and public access laws, the state Public School Code, and professional ethical standards.

Per the suspension, Superintendent Arsenio Romero began reporting directly to Stewart until such time as the secretary could delegate that responsibility. Stewart indicated he will delegate governance to a newly appointed group of Los Lunas residents, including C'Moya.

C'Moya served on the Los Lunas Schools Board of Education from 2015 through 2019, including two years as vice president and one year as secretary. She also spent four years on the Finance Committee, including two years as chair, and she is currently a community representative to the board's Audit Committee.

"Ms. C'Moya's experience and her deep knowledge about the workings of the Los Lunas district will make her a steadying influence during this transitional time," Stewart said.

"When I chose not to run for re-election to the school board in 2019, I never intended to turn my back on the Los Lunas School District," Ms. C'Moya said. "I'm very interested in restoring the credibility and function of the district and working again with its wonderful staff and students."

The secretary intends to name additional designees, and is requesting letters of interest from those who meet the following qualifications:

- Live within the boundaries of the Los Lunas School District;
- Be able to devote the time necessary to serve as a designee and to participate in required trainings;
- Be committed to making decisions in the best interest of the students of Los Lunas;
- Be committed to the responsible stewardship of public resources with the highest degree of integrity;
- Be a collaborative member of a team, able and willing to engage with others in a professional and performance-focused manner;
- Have no felony convictions.

Anyone meeting those qualifications who wishes to be considered should submit a letter of interest (up to 250 words) and a resume via email to Lucy.Valenzuela@state.nm.us by 5 p.m. Tuesday, June 8.

Letters of interest must include:

- The applicant's address;
- Which **School Board District** the applicant lives in;
- The names and contact information for up to three professional references;
- Whether the applicant has a child/children currently in the district and, if so, the school(s) they attend.

Applicants are asked to use the following naming convention for files:

- FirstName_LastName_Resume (example: John_Doe_Resume)
- FirstName_LastName_LetterOfInterest (example: Jane_Smith_LetterOfInterest)

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

May 26, 2021

LOS LUNAS SCHOOL BOARD SUSPENDED BASED ON CREDIBLE EVIDENCE OF LAW VIOLATIONS BY SOME MEMBERS

SUPERINTENDENT WILL REPORT DIRECTLY TO PUBLIC EDUCATION SECRETARY

SANTA FE — The entire Los Lunas school board has been suspended due to credible evidence that certain members have persistently violated procurement and public access laws, the state Public School Code, and professional ethical standards, the Public Education Department announced today.

Secretary Ryan Stewart informed the five-member elected board of the suspension in a letter that also directed Superintendent Arsenio Romero to begin reporting directly to Stewart or his designate.

In the letter, Stewart cited the solemn trust voters place on school board members to act with integrity as effective stewards of public resources.

“The conduct of certain Los Lunas School Board members is antithetical to these standards and has impeded the ability of the board as a whole to act as it should,” Stewart wrote. “This conduct has created a sense of instability and ethical ambiguity that negatively impacts all aspects of the district’s operations and that severely impairs the educational process in the district.”

According to the letter, the Public Education Department first warned the Los Lunas board of reported violations in November and followed that by providing training to board members in January and March regarding the relevant laws and rules.

Despite those efforts, certain board members — who are not named — persisted in engaging in improper conduct, the letter said.

“Good governance is a responsibility we take very seriously,” Stewart said. “We make these tough calls in the best interest of the students.”

“The role of the school board member is integral to student success,” Superintendent Romero said. “Los Lunas Schools wants to ensure the community that every student has the best opportunity for a great learning experience. We will continue to move forward toward that goal.”

The letter said PED has credible evidence of these and other violations by one or more board members:

PUBLIC ACCESS CONCERNS

- Knowingly misrepresenting information in public meetings;
- Violating the Open Meetings Act by using rolling quorums;
- Acting on matters not described with reasonable specificity on board meeting agendas;
- Violating the Inspection of Public Records Act by refusing to produce records as required.

PROCUREMENT CONCERNS

- Interfering with district contracts and not following the Procurement Code;
- Directly asking or demanding a vendor to redo a part of a contract;
- Attempting to extort vendors by suggesting they would receive a district contract if they agreed to personally enrich a board member;
- Soliciting bids;
- Providing confidential bid information to potential vendors;
- Demanding contracts for goods and services be awarded to certain vendors, bypassing appropriate procurement procedures;
- Soliciting services and contracts without working with the district's chief procurement officer and central procurement office.

ETHICAL CONCERNS

(Possible violations of board policy and/or Public School Code)

- Addressing a district employee in an inappropriate and threatening manner in a public meeting;
- Inducing an employee to lie about a supervisor;
- Falsifying allegations about financial misconduct of school administrative personnel;
- Attempting to extort school administrative, support and maintenance personnel through intimidation and threats;

- Interfering with personnel matters, including demanding the demotion, suspension and/or termination of school personnel, decisions and responsibilities properly assigned by law to the superintendent;
- Interfering with overall district operations;
- Demanding family members be hired, in violation of prohibitions on nepotism;
- Interfering with the superintendent and administrative staff roles.

The suspended school board consists of President Eloy G. Giron, Vice President P. David Vickers, Secretary Frank A. Otero and members Bryan C. Smith and Steven R. Otero.

Per the letter, they may not contact school staff or use school equipment or facilities during the indefinite suspension, and they cannot use the board's attorney to represent them.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

May 25, 2021

3RD SCHOOL IN NEARLY 2 MONTHS REQUIRED TO CLOSE FOR 14 DAYS

4 RAPID RESPONSES RETURN FARMINGTON SCHOOL TO REMOTE INSTRUCTION

SANTA FE — A high school in Farmington has become the third of New Mexico's 840 public schools to face a mandatory, 14-day return to remote instruction in the nearly two months following widespread school reentry.

Piedra Vista High School received the closure order Tuesday after reporting four Rapid Responses in 14 days, the state's conservative threshold to prevent spread of COVID-19.

Piedra Vista, which has about 1,460 students, has up to seven days to close and then must remain closed for 14 days.

Eldorado High School in Albuquerque on April 13 became the first public school required to return to remote instruction for 14 days, a period that ended April 27. Yucca Middle School in Clovis received a closure order May 11 and returned to in-person learning today (May 25).

About 40 schools have returned voluntarily to remote instruction temporarily since April 5 in an abundance of caution after a few cases or due to student or staff quarantines as close contacts.

“All the metrics continue to show that schools are safe places and are not contributing to community spread,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “Our safety protocols, including three mandatory closures, are keeping us safe as overall school case numbers decline, positivity rates remain incredibly low and vaccination numbers for everyone age 12 and up continue to increase.”

The Rapid Response system, which tracks potential outbreaks at the earliest stages, is part of New Mexico’s COVID safety net.

A Rapid Response is one or more positive cases at a school that were infectious while on campus. All cases that a school was notified of on a single day, along with all cases with test dates through the following day, are grouped into a single rapid response. **Read the complete COVID-19 Rapid Response Watchlist here.**

Only the individual school that reaches the four-in-14 threshold is required to return to remote learning. Other schools in the same district are not impacted.

The New Mexico Environment Department keeps track of Rapid Responses based on its own reports and those from other state agencies, including the Public Education Department.

In addition to the closure list, the Environment Department produces a Watchlist of locations with two or more Rapid Responses. On Monday, 14 New Mexico public schools were on the Watchlist, down from a high of 68 on May 6.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

May 24, 2021

NEW MEXICO EXPANDS COMMUNITY SCHOOL MODEL

50 GRANTS AWARD $6.6M FOR 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

SANTA FE — The Public Education Department has issued 50 grants totaling $6.6 million to schools across New Mexico to plan for or to implement the community school strategy in the 2021-2022 school year.

The latest round of funding brings to 109 the number of grants issued since April 2019, when Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed into law the New Mexico Community Schools Act. Last year, 29 grants were issued totaling $5.2 million.

“New Mexico continues investing in the community school strategy because we know that academic success for many students requires an integrated focus on all their needs, which partnerships with community agencies and local government can provide,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “This strategy works, and we’re grateful to the governor and the Legislature for recognizing that and funding this important initiative.”

Funding for these grants comes from $10.3 million appropriated by the Legislature and $3.7 million from the federal government for school improvement.

Community schools are existing schools that implement specific strategies to provide students with whatever they need to be academically successful, often by leveraging community resources. In New Mexico, the community school strategy is intended to improve the conditions for learning, which should lead to increased attendance and graduation rates, among other outcomes.

Each community school identifies its own needs and capacities, which may include on-campus health and dental clinics, after-school programming, deep engagement with families and community organizations, and collaborative leadership and practices.

These strategies are effective in any school but are especially designed to meet the educational needs of low-achieving students in high-poverty schools. The community school model aligns with New Mexico's response to the Yazzie-Martinez consolidated lawsuit over education equity.

Schools that receive planning grants are eligible to apply for three additional rounds of implementation funding if grant requirements are met annually. If each grant recipient fully implements the community school model, New Mexico will have 54 federal and state-funded community schools in three years — up from 33 now.

Grants for the 2021-2022 school year include 21 planning grants, first-time awards ranging from $32,000 to $50,000:

ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- Del Norte High
- East San Jose Elementary
- Edward Gonzales Elementary
- Helen Cordero Primary
- Mark Armijo Academy
- Reginald Chavez Elementary
- Truman Middle
- APS Charter: ACE Leadership High
- APS Charter: Albuquerque Sign Language Academy

- APS Charter: Gordon Bernell

CENTRAL CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS

- Newcomb High

LAS CRUCES PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- Alameda Elementary

MORIARTY-EDGEWOOD SCHOOLS

- Moriarty Elementary

PEÑASCO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

- Peñasco High

SANTA FE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- Kearney Elementary
- Milagro Middle
- Nina Otero Community

TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS

- Truth or Consequences Middle

STATE CHARTERS

- Albuquerque Bilingual Academy
- School of Dreams Academy (Los Lunas)
- Taos Academy Charter

The remaining grants went to schools that previously received an implementation grant and are now in either year two or year three of implementing the community school strategy. Those implementation grants were for $150,000 each. Three community schools funded with school-improvement funds continued their $1 million award for a period of two years . (**A complete list is**

available here on the Community Schools page on the Public Education Department website.)

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

May 21, 2021

PARTICIPATION INCREASES IN EXTENDED LEARNING PROGRAMS

MORE NM DISTRICTS, CHARTERS SIGN UP FOR 2021-22 SCHOOL YEAR

SANTA FE — About 60% of New Mexico K-12 students will spend additional time in school next year based on preliminary reports of expected participation in the state's two extended-learning-time programs.

The Public Education Department now expects 191,000 students — out of 317,000 enrolled — to participate next year in either the K-5 Plus program or Extended Learning Time Program. Additional classroom time is a powerful tool to accelerate learning, and the two programs are a core component of the state's strategy to improve educational outcomes for every student in alignment with the Yazzie-Martinez consolidated lawsuit.

The expected numbers would be a 29% increase over last year's participation rate but far short of the full participation New Mexico legislators hoped for when appropriating an additional $80 million for the programs this year. A proposal before the legislature to make participation mandatory failed to pass, leaving it to districts and state charter schools to decide whether to participate. Fifty-two districts and charter schools declined, and those that opted in could select which schools in the district will participate.

“These are local-control decisions, and we respect that,” said Deputy Secretary Katarina Sandoval, who oversees the extended learning time programs. “We heard from a number of districts that their people — educators, students and families — are just exhausted after this pandemic year, but that in a year, they’ll be in. We’re looking forward to even more participation next year.”

The Public Education Department promoted participation in the extended learning time programs during weekly group calls with superintendents and charter school leaders and individual outreach.

In the end, 127 of New Mexico’s 187 districts and state charter schools opted to participate in one or both of the extended learning time programs, with eight districts that haven’t reported yet.

K-5 Plus adds up to 25 days to the school calendar for kindergarten through fifth grade, while the Extended Learning Time Program adds up to 10 days. Both programs provide funding for districts and charters to extend the regular school year. They are not remedial programs.

K-5 Plus grew out of a K-3 Plus pilot project the Legislature funded in the 2004-2005 school year. The goal was to show that increased time in kindergarten and the early grades narrows the achievement gap between at-risk and other students, increases cognitive skills and leads to higher test scores for all participants.

In its early years, the program required districts and charter schools to add 25 additional days to the beginning of the regular school year, and it required K-5 Plus teachers to continue with the same student cohort in the fall. Those requirements made it difficult for some districts to staff the programs.

This year, Senate Bill 40 gave districts and charter schools more flexibility in implementing the K-5 Plus program by allowing the 25 days of additional instructional time to be

added at any point during the school year. The legislation also required that, at schools where a program is implemented, every student must participate. Previously, participation has been voluntary.

The expected participation numbers for the 2021-22 school year are based on a survey that districts and charter schools completed this spring. The first window opened in March and early April; the second window opened in May and closed last week.

Some districts that opted in during the first window of the survey had adjusted participation numbers by the second window due to the results of family and teacher surveys and other community input that is required as part of the budget process. Their budgets will be adjusted to eliminate the extra funding that comes with participation in the extended learning time programs.

Unspent funds appropriated for the two programs reverts to the Public Education Reform Fund, which can be used for future educational purposes.

The 2021 Legislature also funded a two-year pilot project called K-5 Plus Pilot 140. Through that program, selected high-poverty and low-performing schools will add a minimum of 10 Extended Learning Time Program instructional days to the base instructional calendar, offer an after-school program and provide 80 hours of professional development to teachers. Each pilot school must add 45 minutes to each instructional day. The goal is to evaluate how equivalent instructional time affects students' academic and nonacademic outcomes.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

May 13, 2021

PUBLIC EDUCATION STAFF TAKE CULTURAL TRAINING

EVERYONE LEARNS ABOUT CULTURALLY, LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE EDUCATION

SANTA FE — Employees at the Public Education Department completed a three-hour training this week on culturally and linguistically responsive education, a pillar of New Mexico's education policy that is designed to help close equity gaps.

Most of the department's 234 employees attended the virtual training, offered Tuesday with a repeat session Wednesday. Additional sessions scheduled for Thursday and Friday are open to New Mexico educators, school board members and tribal education directors. In all, nearly 500 people pre-registered for the course.

"Our vision — rooted in the immense strengths of the families and students of New Mexico — specifically and unapologetically places stakes in the ground in affirmation of our belief in a culturally and linguistically responsive educational system," Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said in an email to department staff. "Through this vision, we take up the opportunity and the responsibility to lead by example."

To that end, all Public Education Department employees — including Stewart — were required to attend the three-hour virtual training led by Sharroky Hollie, Ph.D, a former classroom teacher who became a national expert in the area of culturally responsive teaching and learning. Since 2000, Hollie has trained more than 150,000 educators and worked in nearly 2,000 classrooms.

"In my 21 years of doing this work, it is the first time for me that state employees in the education department have been required to attend," Hollie said. "But let's not get caught up in the moment. Significance and impact are two

different things. We can mandate trainings. Can we mandate change?"

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive education practices validate and affirm a student's home culture and language to create connections with other cultures and languages in various social contexts.

"As a state agency, we have the responsibility of ensuring that all children in New Mexico receive an equitable education while we reaffirm their individual home culture and language," said Lashawna Tso, assistant secretary for Indian education, who introduced the presenter. "We do so by honoring and respecting the diverse languages and cultures our children bring to the classrooms and ensuring our actions match our words and intentions."

The Public Education Department has asked New Mexico districts and charter schools to adopt Culturally and Linguistically Responsive strategies as one part of a comprehensive effort to create an effective and equitable system of supports for all students.

That plan emerged in response to the Yazzie-Martinez consolidated lawsuit, in which a court found the state had failed to provide a sufficient education to all public-school students, especially those who are Native American, economically disadvantaged, English learners and those with disabilities. Other key components of the state's response include equity councils and a district-level assessment of root-causes of problems and readiness for improvements.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

May 11, 2021

CLOVIS SCHOOL ONLY SECOND REQUIRED TO CLOSE FOR 14 DAYS

FOUR RAPID RESPONSES RESULT IN SCHOOL RETURNING TO REMOTE INSTRUCTION

SANTA FE — A middle school in Clovis became only the second of New Mexico's 840 public schools to face a mandatory, 14-day return to remote instruction based on COVID-19 spread following widespread school reentry on April 5.

Yucca Middle School, which has about 600 students, received a closure order Tuesday based on four Rapid Responses in 14 days, the state's conservative threshold to prevent spread of the novel coronavirus. The school has up to seven days to close and then must remain closed for 14 days.

Portales High School, which has almost 800 students, was ordered closed on Friday for 14 days, but the order was rescinded after determining the district had misreported a daycare case as occurring in the high school. While the daycare is located on high school property, the two populations are separate.

Eldorado High School in Albuquerque on April 13 became the first public school required to return to remote instruction for 14 days, a period that ended April 27.

Some districts or schools have returned voluntarily to remote instruction temporarily since April 5 due to some aspect of the pandemic. For example, some schools found they had too few students or staff members for in-person learning due to quarantines of close contacts. Others decided after a few school-related cases to return to remote learning in an abundance of caution before reaching the threshold.

"Our system of safety protocols is, indeed, working to keep our schools and communities safe from unchecked COVID spread," Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said.

“Most New Mexico students have enjoyed the benefits of in-person learning uninterrupted since at least April 5, but we are prepared for brief spells of remote learning when needed and understand that will be the situation until the virus is finally defeated.”

The Rapid Response system, which tracks potential outbreaks at the earliest stages, is part of New Mexico’s COVID safety net.

A Rapid Response is one or more positive cases at a school that were infectious while on campus. All cases that a school was notified of on a single day, along with all cases with test dates through the following day, are grouped into a single rapid response. **Read the complete COVID-19 Rapid Response Watchlist here.**

Only the individual school that reaches the four-in-14 threshold is required to return to remote learning. Other schools in the same district are not impacted.

The New Mexico Environment Department keeps track of Rapid Responses based on its own reports and those from other state agencies, including the Public Education Department.

In addition to the closure list, the Environment Department produces a Watchlist of locations with two or more Rapid Responses. On Monday, 50 New Mexico public schools were on the Watchlist, down from a high of 68 on May 6.

Staff cases since the beginning of March have stayed flat despite a return to in-person learning.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

May 10, 2021

NM MAKES PROGRESS ON CLOSING DIGITAL DIVIDE

RECENT COURT RULING CONFIRMS STUDENTS NEED BROADBAND AND DEVICES

SANTA FE — State government officials have been working hard to get digital devices and broadband access to students across New Mexico; the challenge presented by a recent court order is how to accelerate the process.

“There is no higher priority than getting every student what they need to succeed,” said Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart. “The Public Education Department has been working at full tilt since March 2020 to expand student access to digital devices and high-speed internet services, and we continue to push aggressively to expand that work.”

The Public Education Department has launched a cross-agency broadband working group to hasten completion of wide-reaching, planned broadband connectivity work, including:

- Quickly getting devices to students who don’t yet have them;
- Quickly utilizing all available options for students who are not yet connected to high-speed internet;
- Getting all eligible students to sign up for the **Federal Communication Commission’s Emergency Broadband Benefit;**
- Implementing a help desk dedicated to assisting students with connectivity and devices;
- Moving forward expeditiously on legislatively authorized broadband capital projects;
- Providing generators for students lacking home electricity to power their devices;
- Testing and investing in innovative technologies to extend the reach of existing broadband networks in communities.

On April 30, 1st Judicial District Judge Matthew Wilson ordered the state to move faster. The ruling came in a

hearing in the landmark Yazzie-Martinez lawsuit over education equity.

“Children who are lacking access to internet and technology for remote learning are not getting much of an education, if at all, let alone one that is sufficient to make them college and career ready,” Wilson said at the time.

Stewart said the court order reinforced the urgency but did not set forth a new objective.

“We don’t need a court order to do what’s right for New Mexico students,” Stewart said. “We’ve been working on solutions for our students who are impacted by a lack of resources, including electricity and other needs that go beyond just the classroom.”

The court ordered the state to identify at-risk students and their teachers who lack digital access, a process that was already under way. The Public Education Department last week launched a data collection effort to identify students who still need computer devices or connectivity. That survey now will become a recurring part of school enrollment processes to ensure continually updated data.

“The ruling just reinforced our efforts to get an updated snapshot of the remaining student needs following all the work and investment that PED and districts have made in the past year to get students connected,” said John Chadwick, the Public Education Department’s educational technology coordinator. “This is really going to provide the granularity we need to keep moving forward.

Once families complete the survey, responses will be linked through an educational database with student addresses and academic status to identify geographical areas and at-risk students needing priority attention.

The broadband working group will build on work accomplished since last March when the pandemic forced schools into remote learning. Since then, the state and its public, private and nonprofit partners already have:

- Distributed 6,282 Chromebooks to students who had no digital devices;
- Added some 1,250 WiFi hotspots — 550 fixed hotspots plus 700 mobile hotspots;
- Provided an updated map to help New Mexicans find the nearest hotspots;
- Negotiated with internet service providers to offer free or reduced-price plans for students or educators;
- Partnered with the Navajo Nation to build 380 new miles of fiber, a $43 million project, to connect homes, businesses, health care facilities and public safety;
- Worked to renew data plans for the Navajo Nation and tribes;
- Installed WiFi on 101 school buses;
- With schools, libraries and service providers, created more than 200 WiFi hotspots around the state;
- Urged school districts and state charter schools to use emergency federal funding through the federal CARES Act for connectivity and technology needs, resulting in tens of millions of dollars being spent toward these products and services;
- Distributed $5.75 million from the Governor's Emergency Educational Relief fund to districts and charter schools for connectivity and technology needs;
- Provided $925,000 in emergency funding to tribal communities to use to connect 35,000 students.
- Notified families and school leaders about the Emergency Broadband Benefit, which will provide discounts to eligible households for monthly broadband service and a one time purchase of a digital device.

"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," 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."

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

May 7, 2021

PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT ASKS KIDS TO RATE SCHOOL MEALS

INPUT SOUGHT ON STUDENT PERCEPTION OF NUTRITION, FRESHNESS, TASTE

SANTA FE — New Mexico school children are being invited to praise — or complain about — the meatloaf, pizza, mac-and-cheese and scrambled eggs served by their school cafeteria.

The state Public Education Department is conducting a food quality survey through May to determine what students think about the 40 million breakfasts and 56 million lunches served in New Mexico school cafeterias across the state each year.

“School meals have come a long way in the last decade with more locally sourced, fresh food and real care about meeting nutrition standards. Now we’re asking students to give us some feedback on what they like or don’t so we can continue improving,” said Michael Chavez, director of the Public Education Department’s School Success and Wellness Bureau.

The online survey, which takes about 5 minutes, will be open through May for students to complete outside of instructional time. Fliers in Spanish and English will be sent home to notify family members and ask their help in administering the survey to younger children.

“We don’t want parents and grandparents who may be remembering their own school meals to exert any influence on how students today feel about what they’re being served,” Chavez said. “We really want to know what today’s

customers think about the freshness, taste and nutritional value of their meals."

Every day, nearly 31 million children receive low-cost or free lunches through the National School Lunch Program, a federally assisted meal program operating in more than 100,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential child-care institutions.

The program serves 4.9 billion school lunches annually, more than the nation's largest restaurant chains. But unlike restaurants, schools are required by law to meet strict requirements for calories, protein, fat, fiber and vitamins — all for about $1.30 per meal, which has to cover ingredients, labor and other overhead costs.

The School Breakfast program has been providing millions of additional meals each day to children in public and non-profit private schools and residential child-care institutions since it started as a pilot program in 1966.

Even when schools moved to remote learning during the pandemic, school nutrition programs continued churning out meals for grab-and-go pickup or direct delivery. New Mexico served more than 32 million school meals from March 2020 through February 2021.

School meal programs began in 1946 with the National School Lunch Act. In the 1980s, budget cuts to the program caused districts to rely on cheaper, processed foods until 2010, when the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act required cafeteries to offer more fruits, vegetables and whole grains in every meal.

While the federal government sets nutrition requirements for school meals, local school authorities decide which specific foods to serve and how to prepare them.

"Schools have a lot of autonomy to build creative menus. Now it's the students' turn to tell us how we're doing," Chavez said.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

May 5, 2021

FOUR NM EDUCATORS NAMED FINALISTS FOR PRESTIGIOUS PRESIDENTIAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE TEACHING

SANTA FE — Four New Mexico educators are state finalists for the prestigious Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching:

Math finalists:

- Teresa Butcher of Laguna-Acoma High School, Grants/Cibola County Schools;
- Marila Mancha-Garcia of NextGen Academy High School, Albuquerque Public Schools;
- Tara Palomares of Sandia High School, Albuquerque Public Schools

Science finalist:

- Lesha Harenberg of Eldorado High School, 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 PAEMST awards.

Up to two teachers—mathematics or science—from each state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S.

Territories and schools operated in the United States and overseas by the Department of Defense Education Activity receive the award.

Teachers who are selected as PAEMST awardees 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/jurisdiction and national STEM teaching.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

April 30, 2021

EMERGENCY BROADBAND BENEFIT PROGRAM TO LAUNCH MAY 12

ELIGIBLE NEW MEXICANS CAN GET DISCOUNTS FOR SERVICES, DEVICES

SANTA FE — Tens of thousands of eligible New Mexicans can enroll for federal assistance beginning May 12 to help pay for monthly broadband services and to receive a one-time discount to purchase a computer.

The Federal Communications Commission, which is administering the $3.2 billion Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, announced the May 12 start date in a news release Thursday that urged state officials to use the interim to inform eligible households about the program.

The program provides discounts on the cost of high-speed internet for eligible households working with approved providers. Benefits include:

- Up to $50 month discount for broadband services per household;

- Up to $75 month discount for broadband services per household on tribal lands;
- A one-time discount of up to $100 for a laptop, desktop or tablet computer purchased through a participating provider.

A household is eligible if one member of the household meets at least one of these criteria:

- Qualifies for the FCC's existing program, **Lifeline**, to help make communications services more affordable for low-income consumers;
- Receives benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program, including through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision, or did so in the 2019-2020 school year;
- Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year;
- Experienced a substantial loss of income since Feb. 29, 2020, and the household had a total income in 2020 below $99,000 for single filers and below $198,000 for joint filers; or
- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating providers' existing low-income or COVID-19 program.

The Public Education Department estimates that 75 percent of families of New Mexico students could be eligible based on their eligibility for other federal assistance, including the National School Lunch Program.

"This could amount to tens of millions of dollars to help New Mexico families pay for the connectivity and devices their students need to learn in a digital age," Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. "We want to make sure families know about and take advantage of this program, which, along with other initiatives, will go a long way toward closing the digital divide in New Mexico."

Eligible households will enroll through participating broadband providers, who will be reimbursed for delivering qualifying broadband services or devices to eligible households. In New Mexico, the Department of Information

Technology is signing up service providers to participate in the program. So far, 38 New Mexico providers have signed up for the program. That list is available here. Nationally, more than 600 providers are committed to the program, the FCC reported last week.

The FCC began testing the program with participating broadband providers last week to prepare for Tuesday's consumer launch to go as smoothly as possible.

More information about the EBB program, including an FAQ, **is available on the FCC website**.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

April 26, 2021

NM TO GET $6.4 MILLION FOR STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

FUNDING TO PAY FOR NEEDED SERVICES AND OTHER SUPPORT

SANTA FE — New Mexico will receive $6.4 million from the federal government over the next two months to help identify and provide services to children and youth experiencing homelessness, the Public Education Department announced Monday.

The funding is New Mexico's share of $800 million authorized by Congress in the American Rescue Plan Act to enable children and youth experiencing homelessness to attend school and participate fully in school activities, including in-person instruction this spring and upcoming summer enrichment programs.

The new funds can be used for almost any purpose that achieves those goals — for example, providing needed

supplies, transportation, short-term temporary housing and mental health services.

“This is a wonderful new asset to help meet students’ most basic needs so they can succeed academically despite their families’ current housing situation,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “Every child should be able to participate fully in their education no matter the barriers. Congress recognized that when it appropriated this money to help our neediest students.”

At last count, New Mexico had 6,573 students experiencing homelessness.

The U.S. Department of Education announced the allocations in a letter sent Friday that included directions for administering, distributing and spending the money.

This funding will supplement money states already receive through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. In the current fiscal year, New Mexico received $793,000 through that act. Part of that money pays for a state program coordinator, who also will administer the new funds.

States will receive 25% of their total allocation immediately — that’s $1.6 million for New Mexico. That first distribution must be used to address urgent student needs, whether academic, social, emotional or mental health. The Public Education Department will reserve no more than 25% for state-level programs including training, technical assistance and engagement with local educational agencies, which will receive the bulk of the new funds.

Funding per district or charter school from this new allocation will be based on the current distribution of McKinney-Vento funds.

The remaining 75% will be released after the state submits a plan describing how the funds will be used at the state level and how money will be distributed to individual

districts and state charters. That could be as soon as June, the letter stated.

State coordinators of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Act are meeting virtually this week to receive additional guidance from the U.S. Department of Education. New Mexico's plan will take shape following that meeting, said Dana Malone, the New Mexico Public Education Department's coordinator.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

April 22, 2021

FEDS APPROVE NEW MEXICO REQUEST FOR SPRING TESTING WAIVER

TESTING FOCUS SHIFTS TO INFORMATION-GATHERING TO TARGET RESOURCES

SANTA FE – New Mexico students will take annual standardized tests this spring to the greatest extent possible, but the results will be used only to inform families, educators and the public about academic achievement after a year of mostly remote learning.

The U.S. Department of Education this week granted New Mexico's request for an accountability waiver, which means no student, school or district will be graded, rated or ranked based on this year's test scores.

"This waiver will allow New Mexico educators to get the student achievement data we need to guide accelerated learning programs without adding stressful consequences at the end of an already stressful school year," Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. "We are pleased that the U.S. Department of Education was attentive and receptive to our state context and request for flexibility."

The notification letter, sent Wednesday, also waives the requirement to test 95% of all students.

Students who returned to in-person learning will be encouraged but not required to participate in spring assessments. For students who remained in remote learning based on family choice, schools and districts will have the option of using locally designed assessments, the state's formative assessment system or other local measures of academic progress.

The Public Education Department, anticipating the waiver would be granted, asked K-12 public schools last month to conduct spring assessments to the greatest extent possible — language that gives districts and schools the flexibility to determine how many students participate in spring testing.

"We are not proposing a particular threshold but will leave it to districts and charter schools to determine the extent testing is possible," Stewart said.

Last year, the U.S. Department of Education waived spring tests across the country after schools moved to remote instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, the federal agency said it would not issue a blanket waiver but invited states to request flexibility. New Mexico first applied for a waiver Feb. 17.

Because of the waiver, the state will not be required to use 2020-2021 testing data to identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement, targeted support and improvement and additional targeted support and improvement. Instead, schools so identified in the 2019-2020 school year will retain that status for another year.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

April 13, 2021

3 NM SCHOOLS CLOSE VOLUNTARILY DUE TO COVID-19

NEITHER REACHED THE THRESHOLD FOR MANDATORY CLOSING FOR 14 DAYS

SANTA FE – Three New Mexico public schools will return temporarily to remote-only instruction in an abundance of caution based on a handful of COVID-19 cases among students, the Public Education Department announced today.

The schools are:

- Mesa Alta Junior High in Bloomfield
- Central Primary in Bloomfield
- Socorro High School

All three schools will return to remote-only instruction Wednesday and reopen on April 26.

Bloomfield Superintendent Kimberly Mizzell made the decision to close Mesa Alta because there were enough potential exposures among staff members who chose not to be vaccinated that Mesa Alta could no longer support in-person learning. The decision to close Central Primary was due to the fact that a majority of the students at the school would have had to quarantine as close contacts to two positive cases.

“They were in the lunch line. They were at recess. They were in the pickup line. The potential exposure was very widespread,” Mizzell said. “We were going to have to quarantine 223 elementary students.”

In Socorro, Superintendent Ron Hendrix decided to close the high school because seven students have tested positive since Thursday.

“Hopefully this will shut [potential virus transmission] down,” Hendrix said.

Socorro Consolidated Schools will hold a COVID-19 testing clinic Thursday at Sarracino Middle School for any student in the district who wants to be tested.

“We are not out of the woods when it comes to this virus, and we will not hesitate to move a building to remote learning if safety conditions warrant such actions,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “I thank the school staff and district leaders for taking these cases seriously and making the necessary and tough decisions to ensure that schools do not spread the disease and that students and staff are kept safe.”

None of the schools reached the state threshold to trigger a mandatory closing. That threshold is four Rapid Responses in 14 days. A Rapid Response is one or more cases reported in a single day of a person being infectious while on campus, along with any positive cases with a testing day up to one day after the reported cases.

Mesa Alta has reported no Rapid Responses since Jan. 26, and Central Primary has reported none since Jan. 29, when it had two. Socorro High has had two recent Rapid Responses — a single case on April 8 and two cases on April 9.

As a proactive measure to identify asymptomatic cases and keep close track of student infection trends, **the PED has asked every district and state charter school to develop and implement a voluntary student testing program no later than April 26**.

The goal is to provide families with opportunities to get students tested. Additionally, student testing could uncover asymptomatic cases in the school community and provide additional information about the prevalence of COVID-19 to help stop the spread.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

April 12, 2021

ELDORADO HIGH TO CLOSE FOR 14 DAYS AFTER 4 RAPID RESPONSES

CLOSURE IS PRECAUTIONARY TO PREVENT SPREAD OF COVID-19

SANTA FE – Eldorado High School in Albuquerque will return to remote-only instruction for two weeks after reaching the state's conservative threshold for COVID-19 spread, the Public Education Department announced today.

The school, which serves about 1,800 students on Albuquerque's east side, is the first public school in New Mexico to have four Rapid Responses in 14 days, the threshold that triggers a temporary return to remote-only instruction.

Eldorado High had Rapid Responses on March 29, April 2, April 6 and April 10.

Albuquerque Public Schools Superintendent Scott Elder and Eldorado High Principal Martin Sandoval were notified by email that the school has seven calendar days in which to begin the mandatory 14-day closure. Sandoval said the school will close beginning Tuesday.

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

A school or business with two Rapid Responses in 14 days goes on **the Environment Department's Rapid Response**

Watchlist. Those that reach four Rapid Responses in the same time frame go on the department's **Closure List**.

Only the individual school that reaches the four-in-14 threshold is required to return to remote learning. Other schools in the district are not impacted.

The school is required to cease in-person student services, with the exception of small groups, adhering to the 5:1 ratio in the Public Education Department's re-entry guidance.

The school was also advised to identify and notify all close contacts immediately to identify any related cases and stop the virus from spreading further.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

April 12, 2021

STUDENTS TO BE OFFERED SURVEILLANCE TESTING FOR COVID

GOAL TO TEST 1% OF STUDENTS PER WEEK ON VOLUNTARY BASIS

SANTA FE – New Mexico public school students will be offered school-based COVID-19 testing opportunities as a further tool to enhance safety amid the continuing pandemic, the Public Education Department announced today.

Student testing will be completely voluntary and at no cost to those who participate. Districts and charter schools will implement student testing programs as soon as possible but no later than the week of April 26.

Students who show proof of being fully vaccinated and students who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days will not be asked to participate.

Testing identifies cases in the school that might otherwise go undetected, allowing the virus to spread further among students and staff. High rates of negative test results inspire confidence that protective measures are working, especially in high-risk activities like sports.

“This is a voluntary student surveillance testing program — it’s a service we’re putting out to the community. This will help build public confidence that schools are safe,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “By testing student volunteers, we can get better information about what’s happening in schools with the virus and get communication out into the community about how our precautionary measures are working.”

The goal is for schools to test 1% of students in the general pool weekly and 10% of individuals participating in sports and activities.

“We still have significant transmission in many of our communities, and we are not past the risk of another surge in disease that results in significant risk to life and health. Testing is one of the tools we have to minimize the risk of this happening,” said Dr. Daniel Sosin, an epidemiologist at the state Department of Health.

Schools are already required to conduct surveillance testing of unvaccinated staff members at rates determined by each county’s color on **the Department of Health heat map**. Turquoise counties must test 5% of eligible staff per week; green and yellow counties must test 12.5%; and red counties must test 25%.

To facilitate staff and voluntary student testing, the Public Education Department and the Department of Health are offering schools a range of testing options at no cost. The options include BinaxNOW antigen tests, the statewide VAULT mail-in testing program, and on-site tests administered through Curative.

BINAXNOW TESTING

BinaxNOW testing is an option, not a requirement, to help schools with a range of testing situations. For example, BinaxNOW can be used for individuals with chronic conditions such as asthma or allergies that present with mild COVID-19 like symptoms; individuals with negative test results may return to class without a doctor's diagnosis. It also could be used for weekly testing of students with disabilities who cannot wear a mask as a way for them to stay in school.

Rather than testing for antibodies, antigen tests determine if a patient currently has COVID-19 virus. BinaxNOW is a nasal swab, but the swab does not need to be inserted beyond the front part of the nose, and results are available in just a few minutes.

Schools received an order form Thursday for BinaxNOW tests, and the test kits will begin arriving next week. Online training will begin Monday. Any trained individual can administer the BinaxNOW test, so testing does not require schools to have a health office.

VAULT TESTING

Families will have the option to order VAULT test kits, now used in staff testing, for student testing. Those tests — available at no cost from the statewide VAULT testing program, can be completed at home with results provided — voluntarily — to the school.

CURATIVE TESTING

The Department of Health can give schools access to the Curative Testing Co., which can come onsite to collect a minimum of 20 specimens for COVID-19 testing. Curative also may be able to train staff to collect the specimens themselves.

Student testing programs are voluntary, opt-in services. No student is required to be tested. Consent from parents will be required for minor children or from students for students who have reached the age of majority.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

March 23, 2021

SESSION ENDS WITH SIGNIFICANT GAINS FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

WINNING INVESTMENTS INCLUDE FAMILY INCOME INDEX, COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

SANTA FE — Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's education moonshot got a $400 million boost during the just-concluded legislative session, including more than $200 million that will go directly to school districts and charter schools and $215 million to fund various innovative, evidence-based initiatives.

"In 2019, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham promised a moonshot to create the nation's best cradle-to-career education system. The New Mexico Legislature has provided much-needed fuel as we continue on that historic trajectory," Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said.

K-12 education highlights from the just-concluded legislative session include:

- The Family Income Index, funded with $30 million over the next two years, would target money toward schools serving the most economically disadvantaged students for evidence based interventions.
- The community schools program would expand with a $5 million appropriation for FY22 and an additional $20 million to be used in future years.
- In support of the governor's ongoing priority of improving education for Native American students, the legislature appropriated $10.6 million for tribal education departments, tribal libraries and tribally based Native American language programs.

- New Mexico will end a longstanding and controversial practice of reducing state funding based on Impact Aid to districts, including those with high proportions of Native American students.
- Voters will decide on a constitutional amendment to tap the Land Grant Permanent Fund to provide reliable funding for early childhood and K-12 education.

The budget also includes $45 million to restore funding that was reduced during the 2020 first special session.

FAMILY INCOME INDEX

The Legislature approved Senate Bill 17, creating an innovative tool to pinpoint schools serving large low-income populations in order to direct additional funding to them. The Public Education Department first proposed the Family Income Index in November, and it became one of the governor's priority bills. The bill received a $30 million, two-year appropriation to support math and reading interventions and other student-support strategies.

COMMUNITY SCHOOL STRATEGY

The Legislature signified its support for the community school strategy with a $5 million appropriation for FY22 and $20 million more after that. Currently, the state funds 33 community schools. The new funding will allow more New Mexico schools to adopt this strategy, which involves schools partnering with the local community to provide high-quality resources and other supports to help mitigate barriers to school success.

IMPACT AID

House Bill 6 gives districts with federally impacted land access to more than $60 million to better serve their students. It also requires transparency and accountability for the use of discretionary funds. A $35 million appropriation from the general fund added to a $31 million

appropriation from the special session holds districts harmless from the impact of this change in policy.

This measure ends the longstanding practice of reducing state funding by an amount equal to 75% of federal funding received by school districts for impact aid — including many districts serving high proportions of Native American students. The governor identified it as a priority bill and part of her administration's response to the Martinez and Yazzie Consolidated Lawsuit.

PERMANENT FUNDING

Voters will decide in November whether the state's Land Grant Permanent Fund should be tapped annually to access more than $100 million for use in K-12 and early childhood education. The Legislature adopted House Joint Resolution 1, sending the proposed constitutional amendment to the ballot.

"This is an opportunity to impact generations of New Mexico students," Secretary Stewart said. "Assuming voters agree, New Mexico's children would be protected from the boom-bust cycles of state revenues with a reliable and fixed source of annual revenue. This would mitigate concerns that sound, evidence-based programs that work one year would be curtailed the next because of budget shortfalls."

CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

- The Public Education Department would hire a new liaison to oversee the educational needs of Black children under House Bill 43, the Black Education Act. Provisions of the act would be carried out over the next few years.
- The Special Education Ombud Act, House Bill 222, provides resources to help families better advocate for the needs of students with disabilities.
- Students could not be penalized for wearing traditional hairstyles like dreadlocks or braids or religious coverings under House Bill 29/Senate Bill 80.

- The governor has already signed into law House Bill 52, which codifies in statute the Bilingual Multicultural Education Advisory council.

EDUCATOR WORKFORCE

- Gov. Lujan Grisham has signed House Bill 22, amending the Grow Your Own Teachers Act to expand who qualifies for the scholarship program, which is designed to increase the number of teachers in the state.
- House Bill 188 would require the Public Education Department to create a license endorsement in secondary computer science. All licensed teachers could qualify by demonstrating sufficient content knowledge.
- Scholarships totaling $5 million would be available for educators who want to apply for National Board Certification. The funding is included in the General Appropriations Act, House Bill 2.
- The General Appropriations Act also includes:
    - $1 million for teacher residencies
    - $1 million for New Mexico's new educator evaluation program, Elevate NM
    - $1 million for mobile panic buttons for classroom teachers

MORE SCHOOL TIME

Senate Bill 40 gives districts and charter schools more flexibility in implementing the K-5 Plus and Extended Learning Time programs. The measure was amended to remove a requirement that all districts adopt the programs. Additionally, House Bill 2, the General Appropriations Bill, includes a $70 million non-recurring appropriation for a pilot project on extended learning using equivalent hours.

"Increasing the time students spend learning is a proven strategy to improve academic outcomes. Although the Legislature decided against making these two programs mandatory, we appreciate the new flexibilities afforded by SB40 and the pilot project outlined in HB2," Stewart said. "Because of these important changes, we fully expect many

more districts and schools to adapt an extended school year program in the coming year as a powerful tool to accelerate learning as students return to full in-person learning."

BY-THE-NUMBERS

$220 million: Increase in funding for the State Equalization Guarantee, the formula used to distribute funds to districts and charter schools. Includes:

- $45 million to remove a credit the state was taking for funding from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, known as the CARES Act
- $35 million to hold districts harmless from impact aid credits
- $80 million for the K-5 Plus and Extended Learning Time programs
- $5 million for instructional materials

$135 million: One-time expenditures for priorities of the governor, including:

- $25 million for community schools
- $30 million for the Family Income Index over two years
- $1.5 million for cyber security
- $20.9 million for Impact Aid liability to the state support reserve fund
- $15.5 million for state support reserve fund to increase aggressive approach to unit value
- $2 million for data systems upgrades
- $25 million for statewide digital access and broadband initiatives
- $10.6 million for Tribal Remedy Framework
- $3 million for Career Technical Education

$79 million: One-time expenditures for priorities of the Legislature, including:

- $70 million for extended learning and equivalent hours pilot
- $5 million for National Board scholarships for teachers

- $1 million for teacher residencies
- $1 million for educator evaluation
- $1 million for mobile panic buttons
- $400,000 for Black Education Act
- $500,000 to supplement STEM programs

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

March 20, 2021

FAMILY INCOME INDEX LEGISLATION RECEIVES FINAL APPROVAL

BILL TO DIRECT $30 MILLION TO LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

SANTA FE — The New Mexico House of Representatives gave final legislative approval late Friday to a measure establishing the Family Income Index, an innovative strategy to direct additional funding to schools with concentrated poverty.

Following the 52-18 vote in the full House, the measure goes to Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham to be signed. It was one of her priority bills. The measure passed the Senate 35-6 on March 13.

“The Family Income Index addresses inequities in our educational system by directing additional funds to schools in economically disadvantaged communities,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “Schools with many economically disadvantaged families have students who are less likely than their peers to score well on tests, earn high grades, graduate from high school and succeed in college. This innovative new tool will level the playing field for so many students who deserve the opportunity to succeed.”

The New Mexico Public Education Department first proposed a Family Income Index in December as a partnership with the Taxation and Revenue and Human Services departments. Sen. Mimi Stewart of Albuquerque championed the idea and introduced it as Senate Bill 17. Reps. G. Andres Romero and Patricia Lundstrom marshaled the bill through the House.

Research has shown that concentrated poverty complicates teaching and learning and creates and sustains disparities in academic outcomes.

“The need is great, and resources are limited. That’s why it’s critical to target extra funding to the schools where it is most needed. We are grateful to Senator Stewart, Representative Romero, and to the full Legislature for passing the Family Income Index,” the education secretary said.

The bill would allow the Public Education Department to use data from the other two agencies and census data to identify the household income of every New Mexico public school student.

The agency then would calculate for every school the percentage of students in five income categories ranging from above average to extremely low, resulting in a ranked list of schools with the highest populations of low-income students. Per the legislation, “very low income” means a household income greater than 75% but less than 130% of the federal poverty level. For a family of four, that equals a maximum income of about $34,000 per year.

For fiscal year 2022, which begins July 1, the Family Income Index for each public school would be the sum of the percentages of the school’s students in the extremely low and very low income categories during the preceding fiscal year. After that, two- and then three-year averages would be used.

The Legislature appropriated $15 million for the Family Income Index for each of the next two years, and that amount will be divided among eligible schools.

The funding is to be used for reading and math interventions as well as other student supports such as hiring school counselors and social workers; creating family information and resource centers; adopting culturally and linguistically diverse classroom texts; offering innovative professional learning opportunities for educators and after-school enrichment programs.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

March 20, 2021

LEGISLATION ENDING IMPACT AID CREDIT WINS FINAL APPROVAL

BILL IS PART OF ADMINISTRATION'S EQUITY-IN-EDUCATION PROPOSALS

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Senate gave final approval late Friday to legislation ending credits for impact aid payments in the public school funding formula, giving school districts with federally impacted land access to more than $60 million to better serve their students.

A recurring $67 million appropriation from the general fund ensures all districts are held harmless from the impacts of this change.

This measure ends the longstanding practice of reducing state funding by an amount equal to 75% of federal funding received by school districts for impact aid — including many districts serving high proportions of Native American students.

The vote was 40-1 for House Bill 6, which was one of Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's priority bills. It now awaits her signature. The House passed the bill 67-1 on March 1.

Impact aid is intended to offset property tax losses from tax-exempt federal and tribal lands within the districts' boundaries. In New Mexico, property taxes are used to fund school capital projects — new buildings and building improvements.

"Ending the impact aid credit has been a decades-long challenge, and today's passage of HB6 marks a historic milestone. This bill removes a systemic inequity in the way we fund New Mexico public schools that has resulted in huge disparities between have and have-not districts," Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. "It will ensure that every penny provided to offset the cost of federal installations and tribal lands goes to the students affected."

House Bill 6 also includes important transparency measures for districts and charter schools to report how they spent the federal funding to improve student outcomes or improve the condition of a school building.

Ending the impact aid credit is one of several equity-in-education proposals the governor is backing. The governor is also backing funding for Native language programs, tribal broadband, tribal libraries and tribal education departments. These appropriations are aligned with the Tribal Remedy Framework, a broad plan created by tribal communities, families and indigenous education experts to promote academic success for Native students.

Generally, states are prohibited from considering impact aid when allocating state aid, but federal law includes an exception for states that maintain a system of school finance designed to equalize educational expenditures. New Mexico has been applying for and receiving that exception year after year since the 1970s.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

March 19, 2021

LIST OF UNACCOUNTED-FOR STUDENTS NOW 2,522

PED, PARTNERS DOWN TO HARDEST-TO-REACH STUDENTS

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Public Education Department and its partners are searching for the final and hardest-to-reach students after months of work to determine that all New Mexico students are safe and receiving education services despite the pandemic.

As of this week, about 2,500 names remained on a list once numbering over 12,000 of students who were enrolled in public schools last spring but not this fall and were therefore feared to be outside the educational system.

A cross-agency team has been whittling the list since November by working with districts, cross-referencing databases, making phone calls and making COVID-safe home visits. In the first months of the effort, the list dropped by thousands each month, but now the going is slow.

Of the remaining unaccounted-for students, 100 are believed to be homeless, a figure calculated by comparing the unaccounted-for list to a list of students who were in a federal program for homeless students last spring.

“We’re getting close, but the last ones are the hardest to reach,” said Katarina Sandoval, the Public Education deputy secretary leading the project. “We are still doing everything we can. Ultimately, we want to ensure that every student is accounted for, but we also have to consider the fact that they’ve possibly moved outside our systems.”

The PED and its partners — the Early Childhood Education and Care Department; the Indian Affairs Department; the Office of African American Affairs; the Children, Youth and Families Department, the Human Services Department and the Graduation Alliance — have called hundreds of families since early January, talking directly to some and leaving messages for others. Those who didn't call back received a second and sometimes third call.

In mid-February, the partners were down to about 2,700 unaccounted-for students, including some 650 for whom no recent contact information existed. A cross-check with a national database turned up contact information for about 550 of those, and outreach to those families is now under way, with almost 200 already located and accounted for so far.

Some students are turning up on their own to re-enroll as in-person learning expands across New Mexico. When students re-engage with learning, the state partners don't always know why they left in the first place. However, an earlier analysis indicated most had enrolled in private schools (26 percent) or moved out of state (23 percent). About 15 percent were found to be enrolled in a public school, and 7 percent are being home-schooled. About 3 percent have dropped out of school altogether.

There are now fewer than 100 students on the original list for whom no contact information is available. Those names are being sent back to the 18 school districts and charter schools where they were once enrolled with instructions to keep looking.

Districts are required to report enrollment and attendance data to PED at regular intervals, beginning in late October. That data is usually not released until it is carefully verified — a weeks-long process — but because of growing public concern about disengaged students amid remote and hybrid learning models, the department broke protocol in November by announcing the unverified data suggesting more than 12,000 students were unaccounted for

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

March 17, 2021

NEW MEXICO TO RECEIVE $979M IN FEDERAL SCHOOL AID; 90% TO BE DISTRIBUTED TO DISTRICTS, SCHOOLS

FUNDING TO OF SET LEARNING LOSS, IMPROVE SCHOOL SAFETY

SANTA FE — New Mexico will receive $979 million in new federal aid for education, with 90% to be allocated by the Public Education Department to individual school districts and state charter schools to help safely reopen schools and address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on students.

Of the remaining 10%, half ($48.9 million) will be earmarked for evidence-based interventions to address learning loss; 1% ($9.8 million) will be used for evidence-based summer-enrichment programs; and 1% ($9.8 million) will go toward evidence-based comprehensive after-school programs.

After those earmarks, the Public Education Department will spend the nearly $30 million remaining on **previously established priorities** including accelerated instruction, closing the digital divide and supporting students with disabilities and students at-risk.

The funding, which covers a 2 ½-year period, is available through the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Fund established by Congress on March 11. The legislation provides nearly $122 billion for states and schools nationwide through September 2023.

The funds will be available to states later this month, the U.S. Department of Education announced Wednesday. The Public Education Department will distribute 90% of the total to school districts and state charter schools through the same process as Title 1 allocations. Districts and state charter schools should receive the funding no later than July 1.

“This new round of federal support for our schools is a critical investment and comes at an ideal time as New Mexico safely reopens all our K-12 schools,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “This funding will support the very evidence-based initiatives New Mexico has already targeted to help our schools and our students recover from the COVID-19 pandemic between now and September 2023.”

Districts and state charter schools must use 20 percent of their share of the new funds to address learning loss through evidence-based interventions that also respond to students’ social, emotional and academic needs. Those interventions also must address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on historically underserved student subgroups, including Native American students, children from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness and children and youth in foster care.

What remains of district/charter school funding after that may be used for a wide range of activities to address needs rising from the pandemic, with a special emphasis on implementing public health protocols that align with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This is the third round of federal pandemic aid for public schools. The $2.2 trillion **Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act** provided about $130 million to New Mexico for K-12 education last spring. That was followed by the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), which sent $435

million to New Mexico for K-12 education after it became law in late December.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

March 8, 2021

ALL EDUCATORS TO BE OFFERED VACCINE BY END OF MARCH; SCHOOLS TO MOVE RAPIDLY TO EXPAND IN-PERSON LEARNING

GOAL: ALL SCHOOLS IN FULL REENTRY NO LATER THAN APRIL 5

SANTA FE — All New Mexico school staff members will be offered a COVID-19 vaccine before the end of March as a gateway to further expanding safe in-person learning with a goal of reaching full reentry by April 5, the Public Education Department and Department of Health announced today.

“I bring you good news today — news you’ve been waiting to hear for a year: We’re going back to school,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “The time has come to get back to the gold-standard in education, which is students and teachers together in classrooms. Our message to New Mexico public schools is that you can and should move as quickly as possible to get everyone who wants it back for in-person learning.”

Additionally, all schools may immediately begin offering New Mexico Activities Association-sponsored activities, including sports, and may resume other curricular and extracurricular activities such as band, choir and drama.

The announcement moves New Mexico public schools to the third and final stage of the Public Education Department’s COVID-19 Safe Operating Categories. All schools were in the remote category until Sept. 8; most

elementary schools were eligible for the hybrid category in the fall; all schools became eligible for the hybrid category Feb. 8; and all schools are now eligible for full reentry, which means all students can return to their school buildings for in-person each school day.

COVID-Safe Practices will remain in place, including mask-wearing, frequent hand-washing, enhanced indoor air quality and social distancing to the greatest extent possible. Schools will be encouraged to use large communal spaces and outdoor spaces to maximize social distancing, especially during meal times.

VACCINATIONS FOR SCHOOL STAFF MEMBERS

Based on an increase in supply of vaccines, the state's substantial progress in vaccinating priority groups and recent federal guidelines on vaccine priority, New Mexico is offering vaccines to every school staff member in the next three weeks. This week, vaccines will be offered to all school staff members who are registered for the vaccine and are outside the Albuquerque metro area. Next week, vaccines will be offered to all registered school staff members in the Albuquerque metro; school staff members not currently registered and who register in the interim will be offered vaccines in the week ending March 26.

"As part of New Mexico's nation-leading vaccine distribution effort, DOH is focusing on vaccinating K-12 educators, early childhood professionals and staff. We are eager to support the safe return of educators and students to the classroom," Department of Health Secretary Dr. Tracie Collins said.

"Our goal has always been to welcome students back to school as quickly and safely as possible. The statewide mobilization to vaccinate all school staff is a game-changer in creating increasingly safe working conditions and school environments for all," Stewart said.

More than 45,000 New Mexicans have registered as educators to receive the vaccine, which includes those in early childhood and higher education. Of the registered educators, almost 15,000 have already received the vaccine as members of previously eligible groups — health care workers; those 75 and older, and those with certain health conditions that place them at high risk for serious outcomes should they become infected.

New Mexico currently has 50,864 K-12 school staff members — including classroom teachers, administrators, bus drivers and food handlers.

Once school staff members provide evidence of full vaccination, they will no longer be required to participate in asymptomatic surveillance testing, which is used to prevent outbreaks. Since school reentry began Sept. 8, the overall positivity rate of school staff surveillance testing is 1%, well below the state's 5% target. The positivity rate since the expansion of in-person learning on Feb. 8 is 0.3%.

MOVING QUICKLY TO FULL REENTRY

The PED and schools have been working since summer to make this return possible, with longstanding requirements for surveillance testing, case monitoring, improved air quality and evidence-based COVID Safe Practices like mask-wearing, hand-washing and social distancing. Before moving into hybrid, districts had to sign assurances that those practices would continue, and site visits by either PED officials or fire marshals were conducted to assure readiness.

With those protections in place, 52,200 of New Mexico's 330,000 public school students are already attending in-person learning, most in the hybrid mode, which means they attend school in person two days a week and study remotely the other three days. Of the 50,000-plus people who staff public schools, 17,000 have already returned to in-person work.

PED is urging districts and schools to move quickly to get many more educators and students through school doors in the coming weeks, with an expectation that all schools will be in full reentry no later than April 5.

“While we know our communities need time to plan, we expect them to move quickly. As a state, our expectation is for all schools to be offering in-person learning for every family that wants it. You tell us your start date, but that start date should be soon,” Stewart said.

Families still may choose for their students to study remotely, and if any district has a significant portion of students making that choice, the Public Education Department will provide whatever flexibility is needed.

“We are phasing out what we’ve been calling ‘hybrid’ learning, although there will continue to be a fully remote option for those families who choose it,” Stewart said.

In no case will a student be required to return to in-person learning if doing so would violate the requirements of a sovereign tribe or nation, some of which are still in a “lockdown” environment.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND SPORTS

Sports and other extracurricular activities may resume immediately at all schools, with explicit safety precautions in place.

For sports, precautions include no congregating during warm-ups or breaks in play; no overnight travel, and masks required for all except when eating or drinking. A complete list of sports guidelines is available on P. 23 of this document.

Choir and band will be allowed outdoors. Students may not share instruments and must follow COVID-safe practices such as the use of cloth bell covers on wind instruments. Both singers and musicians must be appropriately masked and must maintain enhanced social distancing of 9 feet

when playing or singing in groups. A complete list of music guidelines is available on P. 22 of this document.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

March 5, 2021

NEW MEXICO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE UP 2%

EVERY DEMOGRAPHIC CATEGORY SAW IMPROVEMENT

SANTA FE — New Mexico's high school graduation rate moved 2% higher for the cohort that graduated amid the global pandemic, and improvement was evident across every demographic group, the Public Education Department announced today.

Nearly 77% of New Mexico's high school seniors graduated in four years in spring 2020, up from 75 percent the year before. Female students had an 81% four-year graduation rate, up from 79 percent, while the rate for males was 73%, up from 71 percent.

Every demographic group showed improvement, with African American students improving by 7 percentage points and homeless students by 5. Caucasians, Native Americans and English learners each saw a 3-point gain.

The 2020 graduation rates for demographic groups include:

Demographic	Last Year's Graduation Rate	This Year's Graduation Rate	GAIN
African American	67%	74%	7 point

Demographic	Last Year's Graduation Rate	This Year's Graduation Rate	GAIN
Caucasian	78%	81%	3 point
Hispanic	74%	76%	2 point
Asian	85%	87%	2 point
Native American	69%	72%	3 point
English learners	73%	76%	3 point
Economically disadvantaged	70%	72%	2 point
Students with disabilities	64%	66%	2 point
Homeless	51%	56%	5 point
Foster care	37%	39%	2 point

"This achievement amid an unprecedented upheaval in the education system is a true testament to the hard work of students who were determined to graduate and educators who were determined to get them across the line," Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said.

The Public Education Department calculates the graduation rate for each "cohort" of students who enter high school the

same year and are expected to graduate four years later. The cohort of 2020 entered high school in the fall of 2016 and consisted of 25,995 students who were ever enrolled for one or more semesters during those four years.

The 2019 cohort's overall four-year graduation rate was 75 percent. When students from that cohort who graduated in May 2020 after five years in high school are added in, the rate jumps to 78.3 percent.

New Mexico's 10 largest communities had these 2020 graduation rates:

Albuquerque Public Schools	74.6
Las Cruces Public Schools	86.2
Rio Rancho Public Schools	88.3
Santa Fe Public Schools	86.3
Roswell Independent Schools	71.8
Farmington Municipal Schools	77.4
Clovis Municipal Schools	70.4
Hobbs Municipal Schools	85.4
Alamogordo Public Schools	80.5
Carlsbad Municipal Schools	71.0

Download the complete data file here.

Contact:

Judy Robinson
judy.robinson@state.nm.us
505-469-5496

Dusty Young
dusty@nmact.org
505-977-5385

March 4, 2021

PED: SPECTATORS NOW ALLOWED AT SCHOOL SPORTING EVENTS

CAPACITY ALLOWANCE VARIES WITH COLOR OF COUNTY

SANTA FE — Effective immediately, spectators will be permitted at all school-related sports to the extent allowed by the current Public Health Order under the limits applicable to large entertainment venues, New Mexico Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart announced today.

This means that schools may allow spectators as follows:

Turquoise Counties:

- Up to 75% capacity of an outdoor spectator area
- Up to 33% capacity of an indoor spectator area

Green Counties:

- Up to 50% capacity of an outdoor spectator area
- Up to 25% capacity of an indoor spectator area

Yellow Counties:

- up to 25% capacity for an outdoor spectator area

In every case, the host team's county color governs the spectator capacity.

"It makes sense to align student athletics with what's now permissible in the current Public Health Order," Stewart said. "We understand the importance of sports in the lives of our students, families and communities. We encourage participation in sports by students as a healthy outlet and by parents as supportive spectators. At our core we want to keep athletes and families safe."

"We are so excited about the opportunity to have spectators at some school sporting events," said Sally Marquez, executive director of the New Mexico Activities Association. "We have been working hard with the Governor's Office, the Public Education Department and the Department of Health to find a way to safely allow fans at the games. We all have something to cheer about."

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

March 3, 2021

PED SECRETARY STATEMENT ON APS' RETURN TO IN-PERSON LEARNING

SANTA FE — New Mexico Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart issued the following statement Wednesday on Albuquerque Public Schools' decision to expand in-person learning options for secondary students:

“Throughout the pandemic, the New Mexico Public Education Department has been open to innovative options presented by school districts that adhere to our guidance and meet our goals to assure student, staff and community safety, optimize opportunities for in-person learning, and base decisions on available data and evidence. Albuquerque Public Schools was able to work with its high schools to offer in-person learning in the hybrid mode for families who choose to opt in. We are happy the district was able to expand in-person learning — a critical step in resuming athletic and other activities. This is a strong first step in the process of getting all students back for in-person learning.”

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

March 3, 2021

REPORT: COMMUNITY SCHOOLS GRANTEES ARE MEETING GOALS

SCHOOLS ARE IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES TO MEET STUDENT NEEDS

SANTA FE — New Mexico’s 33 state-funded community schools and their partners provided expanded learning time and social and health services for 11,048 students in the last 18 months despite the global pandemic, according to a report released Tuesday by the Public Education Department.

The State of the State Brief by the department’s Community Schools and Extended Learning Bureau reports on progress in implementing the New Mexico Community Schools Act, which Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed into law in April 2019.

The legislation provides grants, managed by the Public Education Department, to support coordination of programs and services for students and families through community partnerships. The goal is to give students, families and communities a broader voice in school decision-making and to better leverage community resources to meet the needs of the whole child.

The pandemic hit just as grantees were beginning to launch the community school strategy at their sites.

“These schools had to quickly pivot from longer-term implementation plans to emergency responses that addressed new and immediate family and student needs, including distance learning formats,” the report notes.

“The pandemic response by our community schools was incredibly nimble,” PED Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “Although barely launched, they succeeded in supporting students and families with continuous remote learning and nutrition over this past year. The community school strategy holds great promise for better serving the academic, social and health needs of New Mexico children and their families.”

Every community school is unique because each reflects its own needs, assets and priorities. Nevertheless, the report notes that all 33 state-funded community schools in New Mexico have a full-time community school coordinator whose job includes integrating families and community partners into school decisions in order to create a shared vision of student and school success.

Of the 33 community schools in New Mexico, 26 are traditional public schools, four are local charters and three are state charters. The 11,048 students they serve fit these demographic profiles:

- 88 percent are economically disadvantaged
- 71 percent identify as Hispanic
- 22 percent receive English learner services

- 18 percent receive special education services
- 10 percent identify as American Indian

Community schools are required to develop programs and services that fall within four broad evidence-based strategies: Integrated student supports; expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities; active family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and practices.

The report highlights individual strategies schools have created to meet each goal. For example, Robert F. Kennedy Charter School in Albuquerque established a school-based health center; Los Padillas Elementary in Albuquerque added a "Genius Hour" to the end of the school day, providing time for student-driven enrichment activities; Peñasco Elementary has become a central hub of family and community information about resources and social services; and Enos Garcia Elementary in Taos established a Community School Council that identifies needs and develops strategies to meet them.

The complete report will be available on the PED website **here**.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

Feb. 25, 2021

PED SECRETARY ISSUES STATEMENT ON SPRING ASSESSMENTS

SANTA FE — New Mexico Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart issued the following statement Thursday regarding spring assessments:

"The New Mexico Public Education Department has not canceled spring end-of-year assessments. We have a

request before the U.S. Department of Education (attached) to waive a requirement that 95 percent of New Mexico students participate in these assessments. Instead, we have asked to test a representative sample of students, which would provide us with the information educators, families and communities need to gauge academic progress.

“We submitted our request on Feb. 17. On Monday, the USDE announced it would not waive spring assessments across the board and across the country as it had in spring 2020 but invited states to request whatever flexibility they needed to accomplish testing amid a continuing pandemic. That is what we’ve done. We have not asked to cancel testing; we’ve asked for flexible options that will work for our schools and students.

“Reporting by a few sources that our waiver was denied is simply inaccurate.”

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

Feb. 25, 2021

COVID IN SCHOOLS: TESTING UP, POSITIVITY RATE DOWN

CASES ON AND OF CAMPUS CONTINUE TO DECLINE

SANTA FE — Two weeks after New Mexico schools began expanding in-person learning, the Public Education Department reports scant evidence of school-based COVID-19 spread.

Both Tuesday and Wednesday this week, only nine school facilities were on the Environment Department’s COVID-19 Watchlist and none appeared on the department’s Closure List. By comparison, 56 school buildings (the highest

number to date) appeared on the COVID-19 Watchlist on Nov. 25.

“This is great news for New Mexico schools. It shows that all the required protocols our school communities have worked so hard to put in place are, indeed, creating a safe environment for our students, educators and school staff as we expand in-person learning,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “We are meeting our commitment to safety, and the credit goes to school administrators who put these protocols in place and are making sure they are followed.”

Schools are placed on the Watchlist if they have at least two Rapid Responses within a 14-day period. They are placed on the Closure List if they have at least four Rapid Responses in 14 days. A Rapid Response includes cases that are identified by testing that occurs up to a day after a school is notified of an initial COVID-19 positive individual who was infectious while on campus.

All New Mexico school districts and charter schools were permitted to expand in-person learning options beginning Feb. 8, and nearly 50 percent of public schools across the state are now offering a hybrid learning model, including 40 of the state’s 89 districts and several charter schools. According to data that was compiled on Feb. 22 from the prior week, about 42,000 students and 9,000 educators were on campus regularly for in-person learning.

New Mexico public schools have a total enrollment of about 330,000 students and total staff of about 50,000.

No public school has appeared on the closure list for having four or more Rapid Responses.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

Feb. 23, 2021

NM HOUSE PASSES BILL UPDATING GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

HB83 PROVIDES FLEXIBLE PATHWAYS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

SANTA FE — The New Mexico House of Representatives has passed legislation to modernize graduation requirements by giving New Mexico high school students more pathways to a diploma while maintaining academic rigor for all.

The House voted 66-1 on Monday in favor of HB 83 by Rep. G. Andres Romero. The bill would reduce the number of credits required for graduation from 24 to 23 beginning with students entering ninth grade in the 2022-2023 school year. New Mexico is one of only 14 states that currently require 24 credits; two-thirds of states require 22 or fewer.

The measure also introduces capstone courses, which allow a student to apply and demonstrate a range of knowledge and skills in one project. All ninth- through 12th-graders could undertake a capstone course as elective credit. Beginning with high school seniors in the 2022-23 school year and for both juniors and seniors beginning in 2023-24, approved capstone courses could substitute for any core subject requirement.

The proposal would still require four units of English and math to graduate, but fewer specific courses would be mandated. Students would still have to take freshman and sophomore English and algebra 1, but after that they could choose from alternatives like journalism or statistics. Algebra 2 would no longer be required.

“This is not a one-size-fits all world, and there is no reason high school should be either,” said Rep. Romero, a history teacher at Atrisco Heritage Academy High School in Albuquerque. “We have students who could benefit from courses like technical writing or construction math but can’t

work them into their schedules. This bill would change that."

High school students currently select 7 ½ electives over four years; that would be cut to 6 ½ under the legislation because many electives would now fill core requirements.

"This legislation would give students the flexibility to choose a path that is right for them, whether that is the traditional path to college or something else, " Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. "We want to offer real and appropriate options while assuring that all our graduates complete an academic program with the rigor and cultural relevance that will prepare them for life."

The bill proposes no change in the number of credits for science (3), social studies (3 ½) or physical education (1), although it would tweak the courses that could be required or accepted in those areas:

- Marching band could count as a physical education credit;
- Options like environmental engineering and wildlife management could count as a science credit;
- Government/civics would become a one-credit required course, up from one-half;
- New Mexico history would no longer be required as a separate course but would be covered in U.S. history.

Students would still be required to earn a credit in a career cluster or workplace readiness course or a language other than English.

If approved, the legislation would be the first overhaul of New Mexico graduation requirements since 2007, when the focus was college readiness. More recent research challenged the assumption that increasing requirements, especially in science and math, had the intended effect.

Contact:
Judy Robinson

505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

Feb. 19, 2021

LIST OF UNACCOUNTED-FOR STUDENTS SHRINKS TO UNDER 3,000

PED, PARTNERS FURTHER WHITTLE ORIGINAL LIST OF 12,186 STUDENTS

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Public Education Department and its partners have accounted for 78 percent of the 12,000-plus students who were enrolled in public schools last spring but not this fall and were therefore feared to be outside the educational system.

As of this week, all but 2,716 students have been accounted for and their status documented. A cross-agency team accomplished this by working with districts, cross-referencing databases, and making phone calls.

The PED and its partners — the Early Childhood Education and Care Department; the Indian Affairs Department; the Office of African American Affairs; the Children, Youth and Families Department, the Human Services Department and the Graduation Alliance — have called hundreds of families since early January, talking directly to some and leaving messages for others. Those who didn't call back received a second and sometimes third call.

The PED is now condensing the remaining list by siblings, and the Children, Youth & Families Department has begun making COVID-safe home visits, starting with students in grades eight to 12.

"These are wellness checks, nothing more. We want to ensure that these families have all the supports they need," said Nick Costales, the CYFD deputy director leading that effort. "All the COVID safety protocols are in place. No one is going inside a home, and they are wearing masks."

The agencies do not have current contact information for 653 of the remaining students on the list. Those names are being cross-checked once more with existing databases and with districts where the students were last enrolled in an effort to find a phone number or address.

“We’re leaving no stone unturned to find these students to assure that they are safe and learning. In the end, there may be some students we just can’t reach, but it will be a very small number,” said Katarina Sandoval, the PED deputy secretary leading the project.

Most of the students accounted for so far have enrolled in private schools (26 percent) or moved out of state (23 percent). About 15 percent were found to be enrolled in a public school, and 7 percent are being home-schooled. About 3 percent have dropped out of school altogether.

Districts are required to report enrollment and attendance data to PED at regular intervals, beginning in late October. That data is usually not released until it is carefully verified — a weeks-long process — but because of growing public concern about disengaged students amid remote and hybrid learning models, the department broke protocol in November by announcing the unverified data suggesting more than 12,000 students were unaccounted for.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

Feb. 19, 2021

FAMILY INCOME INDEX LEGISLATION FILED IN NM SENATE

SEN. STEWART’S BILL WOULD DIRECT MORE FUNDING TO LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

SANTA FE — Senate Pro Tempore Mimi Stewart introduced legislation Thursday that would establish the Family Income Index, an innovative new strategy to attack concentrated poverty in New Mexico schools by directing additional funding to those schools with the greatest need.

The New Mexico Public Education Department first proposed a Family Income Index in December as a partnership with the Taxation and Revenue and Human Services departments to more precisely target resources to schools with large populations of economically disadvantaged students.

“I thought this was an innovative way to approach an age-old problem,” said Sen. Stewart, who is a retired educator. “Schools with large populations of low-income students need specific programs and services to support them, and those things cost money. The Family Income Index will target additional financial support to where it’s needed most.”

Research has shown that concentrated poverty complicates learning and teaching and creates and sustains disparities in academic outcomes. For example, in schools with large numbers of economically disadvantaged students, students are less likely to score well on tests, earn high grades, graduate from high school and succeed in college than their peers in socioeconomically diverse schools.

“This is an equity issue, pure and simple. We know these disparities exist, and we know of specific strategies that help equalize academic outcomes,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “Senator Stewart’s bill would target funding to help schools do what we know works.”

Per the legislation, Senate Bill 17, the Public Education Department would use data from the other two agencies to calculate the household income of every New Mexico public school student. The agency then would calculate for every school the percentage of students in five income categories ranging from above average to extremely low, resulting in a

ranked list of schools with the highest populations of low-income students.

Schools would use the extra funding provided through the index for programs that have been shown to improve student outcomes. Funding could be used for school counselors and social workers; for family information and resource centers; for culturally and linguistically diverse classroom texts; for innovative professional learning opportunities for educators; for after-school enrichment programs; for robust community needs assessments; for academic interventions such as structured literacy and evidence-based math strategies; and for mentoring supports, to name a few.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

Jan. 20, 2021

PED SEEKS WAIVER TO PAUSE SPRING STUDENT ASSESSMENT

HIGH-STAKES TEST DATA WOULD BE INVALID AMID PANDEMIC

SANTA FE — The Public Education Department will request a waiver that would allow schools and districts to skip high-stakes student assessments again this spring, shifting instead to optional testing to benchmark academic achievement and identify any gaps in learning.

The U.S. Department of Education waived the end-of-year assessment requirement for all 50 states last spring amid abrupt school closures and a shift to remote learning. New Mexico will join other states, including Michigan, New York, Oregon and Washington, in asking for a new waiver for spring 2021.

“As we approach the spring 2021 testing window, New Mexico finds itself in a situation parallel to spring 2020,” Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. “We are requesting this waiver because test data would be invalid given the abbreviated time we’ve had for in-person learning and to prioritize student wellness in a way that high-stress, high-stakes testing does not.”

New Mexico proposes to allow schools and districts to opt-in to administer end-of-year standardized tests, creating a sample of data to identify where students stand academically after a year of non-traditional education. Results from optional testing would not be used to make important decisions about students, educators, schools, or districts, thus reducing the stakes — and stress — for students and educators.

“We’ll ask districts to participate voluntarily in assessments so we’ll have a representative sample showing where we are in terms of student performance,” said Deputy Secretary Gwendolyn Perea Warniment.

In addition, New Mexico will continue offering the SAT for high school students as an equity issue because it is required with most college applications.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

Jan. 26, 2021

IN-PERSON LEARNING TO BE EXPANDED TO ALL K-12 SCHOOLS

SECONDARY SCHOOLS INCLUDED IN NEW RETURN-TO-SCHOOL PLAN

SANTA FE — Middle and high school students are included in a decision announced Tuesday to expand in-person

learning options beginning Feb. 8 for every district and charter school across New Mexico based on extensive preparations and protocols to assure student and educator safety.

The Public Education Department's updated guidance for expanded in-person learning, approved by Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, gives school districts and charter schools three options for in-person learning:

- All schools — elementary and secondary — in all counties will be eligible to enter the hybrid mode, which means bringing back up to 50 percent of students at a time in order to maintain social distancing and to keep students in smaller cohorts to avoid virus transmission;
- Districts and schools with fewer than 100 students may bring back all students in a 5:1 ratio with no more than six people per enclosed indoor space;
- Districts/schools not ready to welcome back students into a full hybrid model may expand small-group instruction to all grades — maintaining cohorts — with up to 50 percent of students participating at a time.

The expansion of in-person learning – announced in the governor's State of the State address, issued Tuesday – is the result of extensive collaboration between the Governor's Office, the Public Education Department, the Department of Health, school and district leaders, unions, educators and school staff to collect COVID-19 data, implement COVID-safe practices, conduct surveillance testing, improve indoor air quality, distribute PPE, monitor the Rapid Response Watchlist, and prioritize educators for the vaccine.

"I'm proud of the months of analysis and preparation conducted by the state alongside superintendents, charter leaders, the Medical Advisory Team and union leadership to ensure the safety of school buildings and environments," Gov. Lujan Grisham said. "There's no substitute for in-person learning. And the health and safety of students, families and educators are non-negotiable. I believe the

planning and hard work have paid off in a robust and epidemiologically sound plan, and districts and schools may soon begin to make the decision to bring back more students safely for in-person learning."

"This is the news we've all been waiting for and a significant step in returning to what we all knew as 'normal' before last March," said Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart. "The state has removed barriers to in-person learning that were erected to protect the health and lives of New Mexicans, but it's important to note that individual districts and charter schools still may decide that it's in the best interests of their staff, students and communities to remain in a remote stance for now."

Even if their schools move to hybrid, families may choose for their children to remain in the remote learning mode, including children living on tribal territory that remains closed.

"We are asking districts to respect tribal sovereignty in this as in other regards," Stewart said. "Students will not be forced to violate the rules of their community by coming and going to school."

All three options to expand in-person learning require districts and charter schools to meet rigorous safety measures, including:

- For red counties, surveillance testing for all in-person staff at a rate of 25 percent per week to achieve 100 percent testing over a month's time;
- For yellow and green counties, surveillance testing for all in-person staff at a rate of 12.5 percent per week to achieve 100 percent testing over two months' time;
- An onsite visit to certify readiness to open safely;
- Continued cohorting of student groups;
- Consistent reporting of the number of individuals on campus;
- Strict enforcement of COVID-safe practices like mask-wearing and social distancing;

- Upgraded air filtration to improve indoor air quality;
- Signed assurance that the district will follow PED Rapid Response Protocols.

PED created **an anonymous reporting portal** last fall to allow anyone to report concerns that a school or district was not meeting the safety protocols, and that portal will remain an important tool for monitoring compliance.

“With appropriate protocols in place, we now know that schools can operate more safely than many other parts of the economy,” Stewart said. “The Public Education Department will continue to see that those protocols are observed.”

This will be the first opportunity for in-person learning since mid-March for most middle school and high school students. Most elementary schools were eligible to reopen in the hybrid mode this fall if they were in a green county and met rigorous safety protocols.

Since then, data from rapid responses show that schools generally have been able to avoid school-based outbreaks in New Mexico, mirroring recent national and international studies. No New Mexico schools have reached the rapid response closure threshold of four rapid responses in a 14-day period. The current test positivity rate for school staff is 2.2 percent.

The expanded in-person learning plan was developed in partnership with two unions representing New Mexico educators.

“NEA-New Mexico has long appreciated the governor and the Public Education Department’s approach grounded in science and safety for our students. We now plan to work closely with them to ensure that those districts choosing to expand in-person learning rigorously follow COVID-safe practices in order to protect the lives of students, families, educators and communities,” said Mary Parr-Sanchez, president of the National Education Association New Mexico.

“We are extremely pleased to see this plan’s embrace of continued COVID-safe practices, among them the strong efforts to safely accommodate high-risk educators, ventilation and classroom air filtration, on-going surveillance testing, sanitation protocols, adequate personal protective equipment, and transportation and isolation protocols,” said Stephanie Ly, president of the American Federation of Teachers New Mexico.

“New Mexico educators appreciate Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and Secretary Dr. Ryan Stewart’s strong commitment to our on-going partnership as stakeholders in this effort, and we celebrate our shared goal of safely returning to in-person instruction and education for the students, families, and communities we serve when each of the COVID-safe requirements are met and certified by the state,” Ly said.

School closings have been hardest on low-income families, especially those lacking digital devices or internet connectivity. That led to a multi-prong, public-private effort to narrow New Mexico’s digital divide by creating hundreds of internet hotspots around the state, distributing thousands of Google Chromebooks to Native American students, encouraging internet providers to offer affordable service, and obtaining state and federal funding to close remaining gaps.

Additionally, PED distributed millions of meals to students and launched ENGAGE NM to provide supports to those disengaged in remote learning. The agency also helped schools prepare to welcome students back by distributing PPE, including masks, and by prioritizing educators for the vaccine.

“The faster we get New Mexicans registered and vaccinated – and the more testing we continue to do – the more we’ll corner this virus and reclaim other aspects of our lives,” said DOH Secretary-Designate Dr. Tracie Collins.

“Because we can better enforce COVID-19 safe practices in schools, as we expand to in-person learning in school districts, we can mitigate the spread of the virus and ensure the best safety measures for kids/students, teachers and staff in schools,” said Human Services Secretary Dr. David Scrase.

The governor first ordered schools closed in mid-March when COVID had only a toe-hold in the state and little was known about how it spread. In the fall, elementary schools in green counties were allowed to reopen in the hybrid mode after meeting rigorous safety requirements; many opted to remain in remote learning mode.

BY THE NUMBERS

Here is a look at supports the Public Education Department and our agency partners have provided to districts, schools, educators and students since schools first closed in mid-March:

TECHNOLOGY PROVIDED:

- 6,285: Chromebooks distributed
- 700: Mobile hotspots distributed
- 102: Cradlepoint devices distributed (WiFi using cellular data)
- $5.75 million: GEER funding for technology (all but $121,000 allocated)
- $1.45 million: Approved for a project to get fiber to Pine Hill School near El Morro National Monument
- 100 percent: The number of local exchange carriers now providing discounted service for students.
- $40 million: CARES Act funding districts/charters spent on technology

MEALS PROVIDED:

- 26,616,879 meals
- 335,000 students served in public and charter schools, Bureau of Indian Education and private schools and

children in residential child care institutions

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT PROVIDED:

- 60,000: N95 masks
- 2,000: Face shields
- 60,000 pairs: Medical gloves
- 562,426: Cloth masks
- 489,420: Cloth masks for adults
- 86,000: Surgical masks

HELP FOR EDUCATORS:

The Public Education Department spent $6 million to make the Canvas learning management system available to every district and charter school for two years to assist with remote instruction.

- 98: Districts or charter schools that have signed up to use Canvas
- 38: Number of those that are currently implemented
- 142,062: Total local courses created in Canvas
- 29,639: Total local active courses in Canvas
- 90,302: NM students enrolled locally in Canvas courses
- 10,968: Teachers enrolled locally in Canvas course
- 33: Unique professional development courses created for educators
- 20,165: Educators who have enrolled
- 97: Percent of districts/charters that have accessed professional development in Canvas
- 1,433: Educators who have attended live Canvas webinars/workshops
- 11,646: Badges that have been awarded to NM educators for professional development

In addition to Canvas, PED provided additional professional development training for educators in these amounts:

- $2.4 million: Math reentry supports
- $1.6 million: Language arts reentry supports
- $650,000: reentry and learning acceleration

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

Jan. 20, 2021

PED, PARTNERS ACCOUNT FOR 7,500+ STUDENTS

UNACCOUNTED-FOR LIST SHRINKS TO 4,639 FROM HIGH OF 12,186

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Public Education Department and its partners have accounted for almost two-thirds of the 12,000-plus students who were enrolled in public schools last spring but not this fall and were therefore feared to be outside the educational system.

As of this week, 7,547 students — 62 percent — had been located through direct outreach, district feedback via spreadsheets, cross-referencing databases and more recent attendance data reported by districts and charter schools to the Public Education Department in early December.

That leaves 4,639 students still unaccounted for, down from a high of 12,186 in mid-November.

The PED and its partner agencies — the Early Childhood Education and Care Department; the Indian Affairs Department; the Office of African American Affairs; the Children, Youth and Families Department, and the Human Services Department — began direct outreach last week, calling hundreds of families of students who remain unaccounted for, talking directly to some families and leaving messages for others. Follow-up calls are underway this week, to be followed by COVID-safe home visits starting next week for those who can't be reached by phone.

The Graduation Alliance, PED's partner in re-engaging with students, is also helping with outreach.

Most of the students accounted for so far have enrolled in either public, private or Bureau of Indian Education schools, while others have moved out of state or are being home-schooled.

PED Secretary Ryan Stewart said the work will continue until every school-age New Mexico child and youth is known to be safe and engaged in learning.

The statewide effort to account for students began with a letter sent in November to each student's last known address. As of Tuesday, responses to that letter had accounted for 1,038 students, with additional responses continuing to trickle in. To date, 91 of those responding to the mailer requested additional assistance; nine were referred to the Children, Youth and Families Department; and 42 were found to not be attending school at all.

"These families are facing lots of loss, lots of challenges. We're hearing heart-wrenching stories," Deputy Secretary Katarina Sandoval said. "We have families hit by COVID loss and secondary students who were separated from their families because of housing issues. In some cases, school just fell by the wayside. We're getting them the referrals they need to get back on track."

Districts are required to report enrollment and attendance data to PED at regular intervals, beginning in late October. That data is usually not released until it is carefully verified — a weeks-long process — but because of growing public concern about disengaged students amid remote and hybrid learning models, the department broke protocol in November by announcing the unverified data suggesting more than 12,000 students were unaccounted for.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

Jan. 14, 2021

EDUCATION MAKES UP ALMOST HALF OF EXECUTIVE BUDGET

PROPOSED BUDGET SHOWS COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION 'MOONSHOT'

SANTA FE — In a clear sign that Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's education "moonshot" remains a key priority amid this year's economic and health crises, the Executive Budget Recommendation builds on recent investments and seeks innovative ways to support students who need it most.

The proposed fiscal year 2022 budget, released Monday by the Department of Finance and Administration, recommends spending $3.3 billion of the $7.3 billion recurring general fund total on public education. That is a 4 percent increase from FY21 as the state moves aggressively to meet its legal and moral commitment to New Mexico students as outlined in the historic Yazzie-Martinez consolidated lawsuit.

"The wellbeing and education of New Mexico's children continues to be a top priority for the state, despite the immense burden created by the pandemic. That's why this budget includes needed resources to meet the new challenge of getting children and students safely back to school and helping them excel," Gov. Lujan Grisham said.

The Executive Budget Recommendation seeks to expand the public education moonshot, which was launched in FY20 with the largest increase in education funding in state history. For FY22, the governor is asking the Legislature to expand the use of funds previously earmarked for K-5 Plus and Extended Learning Time Programs to allow school districts and charter schools access to that money to pay for career technical education and community school initiatives, in addition to paying for added learning time.

"We want more schools, more districts and more students to opt-in to programs designed to extend instructional time,

and those that do will be eligible for additional resources for Career Technical Education and Community Schools," Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said.

EQUITY FIRST BUDGET FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

Key to the governor's plan are proposals to direct additional resources to schools and districts with the greatest proportion of low-income students. To that end, the budget proposes eliminating the practice of reducing state funding for districts that receive federal impact aid payments, funding that often supports the education of Native American students. This provision would cost $35 million and would mean additional resources to school districts and charter schools.

Additionally, the budget includes a new "Family Income Index," a proposal that would use more targeted tax and income data to identify schools that serve large populations of economically disadvantaged students and direct $80 million from the Public Education Reform Fund over two years to schools that need it the most.

"The Family Income Index will let us better identify students who need the most support, and then direct more resources to their schools, which can decide how best to help them," Secretary Stewart said. "At its heart, this is an equity budget designed to give all New Mexico children a better chance to learn and thrive."

Equity is also behind the executive budget proposal to transfer $30 million in unspent funds to the Indian Education Fund to support efforts to improve education in New Mexico's tribal communities. The appropriation would support implementation of the Tribal Remedy Framework, support tribal sovereignty and provide resources for locally determined needs.

CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The executive budget recommendation also requests $10 million to provide digital devices and extend internet connectivity to remote parts of New Mexico to give all students access to the tools they need to access digital content and instruction both during the health pandemic and in the future.

State agency budgets for FY22 will be finalized during the 2021 legislative session.

Contact:
Judy Robinson
505-469-5496
judy.robinson@state.nm.us

Jan. 8, 2021

NM EDUCATORS IN LINE FOR COVID-19 VACCINE

PHASE 1B OF VACCINATION PLAN INCLUDES K-12 EDUCATORS AS ESSENTIAL WORKERS

SANTA FE — New Mexico educators are now in line for the COVID-19 vaccine, a critical step in returning to greater in-person learning amid the global pandemic, the New Mexico Department of Health announced Friday.

Phase 1B of New Mexico's vaccine distribution plan is now under way and will include classroom teachers, school-based cafeteria and janitorial workers and administrative and support staff, the Department of Health said.

"This is welcome news and a critical step in getting back to the educational gold standard, which is in-person learning," Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart said. "Prioritizing educators early in the vaccine distribution process shows New Mexico's continuing commitment to the health and safety of these vital frontline workers in whose hands we entrust the future of our children."

The Department of Health sets the criteria for the phases of vaccine distribution, which began in late December. In

Phase 1A, vaccines were available to frontline health-care workers and others providing direct in-person services to patients, persons with disabilities and persons living in congregate care settings.

Phase 1B, which began Friday, adds these groups, in sequence: New Mexicans 75 years and older; those 16 and older with underlying medical conditions that place them at greater risk from COVID-19, and frontline essential workers who cannot work remotely. The latter group includes early education and K-12 educators.

To manage distribution as more vaccines become available, the health department has established a website where New Mexicans can register for the vaccine: https://cvvaccine.nmhealth.org. Nearly a quarter million New Mexicans have already used the website to create a personal profile that includes medical and employment information and other data that will determine when they are eligible to get a vaccine. Those who register will be notified when they become eligible and shots are available in their area.

Users who have questions or would like support with the registration process – including New Mexicans who do not have internet access – can dial 1-855-600-3453, press option 0 for vaccine questions, and then option 4 for tech support

---

ARCHIVED NEWS ARTICLES

Archived articles from 2020

Archived articles from 2019

Page last updated July 3, 2021

WHAT CAN WE HELP YOU FIND?

Search ...

LICENSURE

- Licensure Homepage
- Applications and Forms
- Apply/Renew/Reciprocate
- License Look Up
- FAQs

DATA

- STARS
- Grad Data
- Accountability
- IT Apps

CHARTER SCHOOLS

- Charter Schools
- Public Education Commission
- Training Opportunities

CONTACTS

- District and Charter Directory
- Contact NM PED
- Superintendents/Officials Directory

INFORMATION

- Public Notices
- IPRA Requests
- Waivers
- Office Website Statement
- Privacy Policy
- Non-Discrimination Policy