

Transforming New Mexico's Public Education System

New Mexico has a historic opportunity to transform education for all our children.

Our students are just as talented and capable as those anywhere in the country. They come from a diversity of cultures, heritages and languages that should be honored and embraced. Yet, these cultural assets are routinely ignored within the education system. Our public schools have been starved of resources, teachers are undervalued, and students lack instructional materials. For decades, the state has failed to provide our students with the education they need and deserve, creating some of the worst racial and economic inequalities for educational achievement in the country. Sweeping changes must be made so that all of our students can learn, graduate and succeed in college and career.

In a landmark court decision, a judge ruled that New Mexico is violating the constitutional rights of students to a sufficient education (*Yazzie/Martinez lawsuit*).

The court ordered the state to take immediate steps to fix our schools and fully support low-income, Native American, Hispanic, English language learner, and special needs students. It highlighted the need for the state to provide a multicultural and multilingual education framework for school districts; offer effective programs like pre-K and extended learning time; and provide oversight of our schools. The court mandated that the state must provide adequate funding for schools so that every New Mexico student can have an equal opportunity to learn and succeed.

Now is the time for change — for a truly visionary and transformative approach to education.

Small fixes are not enough. Our communities must lead the way to fundamentally reimagine and transform our schools.



Transform Education NM Members

Learning Alliance NM

Native American Community Academy (NACA)

NGAGE NM

National Education Association NM (NEA-NM)

NACA Inspired School Network (NISN)

The Sun Project

New Mexico Education Action Alliance (NMEAA)

Dual Language Education of NM

College Horizons

New Mexico Association for Bilingual Education (NMABE)

Native American Budget & Policy Institute (NABPI)

New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty (NMCLP)

The Santa Fe Indian School Leadership Institute (SFIS)

NM Dream Team/United We Dream

CHI St. Joseph's

NM School Boards Association

Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP)

Coalition for the Majority

Current and former superintendents of school districts

Plaintiff school districts (Cuba Independent School District, Gallup-McKinley County Schools, Lake Arthur Public Schools, Moriarty Edgewood School District, Rio Rancho Public Schools, Santa Fe Public Schools)

PLATFORM FOR ACTION

To comply with the court's order to ensure all students are college and career-ready, hundreds of educational leaders, families, tribal leaders, and the lawsuit plaintiffs have developed a "platform of action" to transform our schools. Supported by research and the volumes of evidence that led the court to its' decision, the summary of these recommendations are below. The full, detailed platform is at:

<http://nmpovertylaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Yazzie-Proposed-Remedy-Platform-2018-09-17.pdf>.



A MULTICULTURAL, EQUITABLE FOUNDATION

At the core of a sufficient and equitable education is multicultural and multilingual learning that responds to the cultures, language and heritages of our diverse student populations. The court found that the state is not meeting its own duties and responsibilities for a multicultural education established in the New Mexico Indian Education Act, Hispanic Education Act, and Bilingual Multicultural Education Act. Research shows a multicultural and multilingual education approach allows students to maintain their language and identity, improving learning and enabling students to do well in school.

- Provide multicultural and multilingual learning at all levels: Make structural changes at the Public Education Department (PED) and enforce standards for culturally and linguistically relevant curriculum and instruction.
- Collaborate with New Mexico's tribes and local communities: Ensure our families, tribal leaders, educators and local experts are at the forefront of shaping the education system.
- Develop multicultural systems capacity through higher education: Financially support higher education departments to train and develop Native American and bilingual educators, promote language preservation and strengthen multicultural curriculum development.



INSTRUCTION, PRE-K, AND SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMS

Research has shown that students do best when their health and nutritional needs are met, and they have the time and opportunities to learn. The court found New Mexico has successful programs that close the educational achievement gap — but the state fails to provide all students access to these programs.

- Ensure all children have access to quality Pre-K: Universally offer Pre-K to 4-year old children and half-day options for 3-year old children, and ensure it is culturally and linguistically relevant.
- Increase instruction & learning opportunities: Offer K-5 Plus, summer, after-school and literacy programs. Our schools need smaller class sizes, relevant curriculum, instructional materials and technology, and enrichment programs.
- Provide comprehensive social services: Provide access to nurses, counselors and social workers in all schools, ensuring culturally and linguistically responsive services. Support the Community Schools model that actively engages parents and the larger community.



FUNDING

The court was clear that a lack of funding is not an excuse for violating the constitutional rights of our students, and ordered the state to increase funding for districts to provide a sufficient education.

- Increase at-risk student funding: Increase the at-risk index in the school funding formula so that at-risk students are funded at 25% above non-at-risk students and base eligibility on the income level used for Free & Reduced Lunch Programs.
- Restore baseline funding: Restore funding to at least 2008 levels (adjusted for inflation).
- Increase funding for transportation, bilingual instruction and rural schools to ensure students have equitable opportunities in our geographically and linguistically diverse state.



TEACHERS

Teachers and other educators are at the heart of the education system. But according to the court's ruling, New Mexico lacks enough teachers to meet student and classroom demands. Teachers are leaving the profession at alarming rates. And our most experienced educators are not teaching in low-income communities.

- Raise teacher pay: To be competitive with surrounding states, teacher pay should be raised to \$45,000/\$55,000/\$65,000 (tiers for starting salaries) and adjusted for inflation.
- Provide more professional development: Teachers should be supported with more professional development days, at their full daily rate of pay. This must include building capacity for culturally-responsive, bilingual instruction and endorsements to Teach English as a Second Language (TESOL).
- Build a pathway of new teachers: Tuition stipends and incentive programs can increase the amount of Native American, bilingual speakers and early childhood educators.



ACCOUNTABILITY

The court found that New Mexico's Public Education Department does not have effective accountability systems and audits to ensure students are receiving a sufficient and equitable education. Action must be taken to guarantee greater oversight and accountability of the PED to do its job.

- Strengthen monitoring of school funding: PED must work with districts to develop a monitoring and accountability system that ensures at-risk students receive programs and services.
- Replace A to F school grading: The current system must be revamped to reflect the goals of our communities, and provide the support needed for our schools and teachers.
- Ensure tribal consultation: PED must consult and collaborate with tribal governments to monitor and evaluate the education system, as part of the government to government relationship with tribes.