



# LEARNING TODAY FOR TOMORROW

2004 ANNUAL REPORT OF NEW MEXICO  
PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT



**New Mexico  
Public Education Department**

Dear Friends,

The New Mexico Public Education Department embarked on a massive reorganization which goes beyond changing names and boxes on a piece of paper. We've expended numerous hours in facilitated full staff meetings to create a new culture in the agency, which is extremely focused on providing excellent customer service to our school districts. We've created structures that facilitate communication and move us from "silos" to a unified support system for schools.

We've faced tremendous challenges as we've worked to get our own financial house in order, meet extensive NCLB requirements, implement the educational reform agenda and focus on excellence and equity while we keep standards high and close the achievement gap. With your support and the Governor's leadership, PED is on the move! For example, we've embarked on the following major initiatives, which include but are not limited to:

- Developing and implementing action plans to address recommendations from the Governor's Progress Agenda (GPA)
- Launching Project Excel, a 10-point plan to address the achievement gap
- Facilitating a statewide town hall on high school reform
- Implementing action plans at the division level to address customer service
- Designing and implementing a School Improvement Framework to address the needs of our lowest performing schools
- Completing an action plan to build a student information system for parents, teachers and the other stakeholders
- Aligning Public Education Commission Strategic Plan Goals, LFC Performance Measures, Governor Richardson's Executive Accountability and Tracking (GREAT) and PED action plans in order to coordinate PED activities and minimize the impact to school districts
- Developing and promulgating regulations in a timely and efficient manner
- Embarking on an independent managerial analysis.

This agency has made great strides. As Secretary of Education, I am proud of what the PED has accomplished over this past year. But more so, I am energized by the promise of what lies ahead.

Truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Veronica C. Garcia".

Veronica C. García, Ed.D.  
Secretary of Education

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2004 ANNUAL REPORT OF NEW MEXICO  
PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

2004 ushered in a new era in public education. Educators and policymakers strived to close the achievement gap, the state's number one education priority, and reforms were launched to prepare New Mexico's students to succeed in a diverse and increasingly complex world.

With a new vision and mission in hand, the Public Education Department, or PED, began its conversion from a regulatory bureaucracy to a dynamic agency that partners with local school districts, communities and other state agencies to do what's best for children.

Under the leadership of Governor Bill Richardson and Secretary of Education Dr. Veronica C. García, it is committed to superior leadership, technical assistance and quality assurance, and to using lessons learned today to effect positive change tomorrow.

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM 2004

### *LESSON #1: To fully experience education reform, several “musts” have to occur*

In 2003, voters changed the state’s system of public school governance. Governor Richardson inherited problems with financial management that had created deficiency issues at the PED. These included frozen staff positions, hiring restrictions, excessive vacancies, inexperienced staff, low staff morale and a poor record of staff attendance.



Secretary of Education  
Dr. Veronica C. García

The first “must” of 2004 was to restructure the PED and address pressing concerns. The restructuring, a major emphasis of 2004, was approved by the State Personnel Office (SPO) and Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) in October 2004. It will assist Governor Richardson and Secretary Dr. García in building a world-class educational system.

The PED’s focus areas under the restructuring are as follows: Instructional Support, Finance and Operations, Educator Quality, Assessment and Accountability, Customer Service, Rural Education, Indian Education and Community Engagement.

In each area, the PED is aligning agency goals to state goals for student outcomes, PED strategies, PED and public school performance measures and Governor Richardson’s Executive Accountability and Tracking (GREAT) Initiatives.

Reducing the PED’s historically high vacancy rate is central to this effort. By working closely with SPO and DFA, the PED’s vacancies dropped to 10 on November 3.

For the second “must,” the PED undertook an analysis of its financial and business operations. As a result, the PED’s Administrative Services Division has focused on the following:

- Improving financial management and enhancing fiscal services to customers
- Launching a customer service action plan
- Initiating a corrective action plan
- Conducting an agency-wide training on financial procedures
- Developing federal grants procedures
- Reconciling federal funds
- Re-centralizing fiscal operations

- Preparing accurate financial reports and timely audits
- Resolving audit findings
- Creating monthly advice sheets for districts on the State Equalization Guarantee (SEG) and funding from the U.S. Department of Education
- Hiring quality staff
- Encumbering funds for districts and
- Reconciling assessment obligations for the PED and school districts.

Further, the PED established procedures to track and prudently utilize an additional \$66.3 million in recurring and \$13.3 million in non-recurring state funding for education reform in Fiscal Year 2005.

Both of these priorities relate directly to the third “must” -- creating positive change in the culture of the PED. At the start of 2004, low morale existed at the department due to uncertainties created by the constitutional change in governance and as a result of a whole series of events over past years.

During 2004, this dynamic changed. The PED’s staff are increasingly working together rather than in silos, holding regular group meetings and connecting for needed change. Staff feedback indicates that efforts to improve the PED’s institutional culture are making a difference. Every division at the PED has completed a customer service action plan, with bureaus tracking customer service complaints. And the PED is working with Public Works, awarded a contract in 2004 to conduct a performance review of the PED and to complete an independent customer satisfaction survey.



Eric Spencer and Lena Trujillo-Chavez with the PED’s Career, Technical and Workforce Education Bureau

Customers across the spectrum are reporting improved interactions with the PED. Access to Secretary Dr. García and her Assistant Secretaries has been especially noted and appreciated by school superintendents.

### ***LESSON #2: High Expectations for All***

In April, Secretary Dr. García unveiled Project Excel, an innovative plan to close the achievement gap in education in New Mexico. That gap, most noticeable between Caucasian and Asian students and Hispanics, Blacks and Native Americans, has held New Mexico back for too long.

Anchoring the plan are high expectations for all. The results are increased expectations and achievement levels for all of our students. Project Excel responds to the challenges educators, business leaders, child advocates, elected officials, students and parents face every day. It includes the following 10 components:

1. Creation of the Secretary of Education’s Advisory Council for Excellence and Equity in Education to help districts plan a statewide conference on addressing the achievement gap and work collaboratively to investigate best practices from within New Mexico and from around the country.



2. Improved support to districts and schools so that our work with groups like Regional Educational Technology Assistance, Re:Learning, Strengthening Quality in Schools and others can be strategic, aligned and coordinated.
3. Aggressive action planning with measurable goals and objectives for the PED so that we’re no longer working in silos but collaboratively.
4. Personalized support in which every district superintendent is assigned an advocate at the PED, available at all times, to provide support, accurate and reliable information and connect them to technical assistance.
5. Targeted district and school planning process so that new goals are established that speak directly to improving student proficiency in all student categories.
6. Ensured alignment with state standards for excellence and criterion-referenced assessments or CRTs so that districts adjust their curricula to reflect the new CRT system.
7. Redefining and increasing parent involvement so that all parents are informed that their children are entitled to a quality education, and to learn reading, language arts and mathematics at the same academic level as other students. If every parent committed themselves to this understanding, student performance would dramatically improve.
8. Focusing on language acquisition and literacy. This is such an important issue for New Mexico. Early language acquisition, bilingual education and literacy must be at the forefront of our work.

9. Implementing higher expectations and supports to achieve higher levels of academic achievement. We're doing this through our standards, which support high expectations and increased student proficiency. We must engage parents, community and business partners in creating and supporting awareness of our standards.
10. And providing a coordinated and targeted Statewide Professional Development Plan for educators. Our professional development must be aligned around identified needs so that we close the achievement gap.

### ***LESSON #3: Do what works but change what doesn't***

As a state, our focus is on providing a future for our children. We cannot stand by and let even one child leave our public education system with a substandard education.

In 2004, the PED worked to uniformly implement a rigorous, engaging and relevant educational curriculum and performance standards so that all students succeed. We can and will become a state where all children graduate prepared to competently participate in postsecondary education or the workforce.

Of immediate concern were improvements in the area of Indian education.

#### **Indian Education**

Efforts to improve the performance of Native American students have been accelerated. The University of New Mexico College of Education is working to increase Native American teachers and administrators in the schools. Teachers working with Native American students are receiving help in getting teaching endorsements in bilingual, TESOL, reading and special education.

Four New Mexico tribes -- the Jicarilla Apache, Santa Ana Pueblo, Santa Clara Pueblo and Zuni Pueblo -- have signed Memorandums of Agreement with the PED to establish standards and criteria and determine competency for persons seeking certification in Native American Language and Culture for grades K-12.

Technical assistance to tribes continues so that native languages are maintained and native language bilingual programs are part of school district professional development plans.



Penny Bird, Assistant Secretary for Indian Education

Tribes will be notified of all curricula development for their approval and support. An application process is being developed for schools and tribes to work together on culturally appropriate materials and resources. And a guide is slated for publication to help schools in their communication with tribes and to identify and prioritize funds for tribal education resources, research, services and development.

The Northwest Indian Education Office, originally conceived in the Indian Education Act of 2003, is now a reality. This office and the Santa Fe Indian Education Office are fully staffed and receiving support from a strong Indian Education Advisory Council. Meetings will continue with the Advisory Council, Secretary Dr. García and legislators in order to strengthen tribal input. Greater native influences in the schools will reduce the achievement gap for Native American students. Further, new performance measures have been established for gauging Indian education programs.

In the coming months, the PED will establish formal government-to-government relationships with tribes and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Education Division. Implementation of the Indian Education Act will be accelerated.

It should be noted that New Mexico is recognized as having one of the best Indian Education Acts in the nation. And it shows.

<b>2004 Performance by American Indians and Blacks on SAT</b>				
	2004 American Indians	Change from Last Year	2004 Blacks	Change from Last Year
Verbal	475	+46	496	+12
Math	487	+68	507	+50

Native American test scores are improving. On both the American College Test (ACT) and Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT), the country’s premier college admissions tests, Native Americans experienced five-year highs. Their verbal score on the SAT grew by 46 points and their math score grew by 68 points over 2003.

The ACT’s Southwest Region Director of Postsecondary and Business Services, Karen L. Pennell, called the increase significant. “It means that New Mexico’s students are making progress,” she said.

While the increases in student performance and participation by Native Americans are moves in the right direction, students' college readiness remains of concern. Low expectations have prevented New Mexico from meeting student needs.

We must keep the pressure on until all high school students graduate having met higher levels of expectation and successfully completed a more rigorous high school curriculum.

#### ***LESSON #4: Rigor, Relevance and Relationships Matter***

##### **High School Reform**

New Mexico and the nation are undergoing unprecedented economic, social and demographic shifts. The challenge facing education is how to increase the rigor of our high schools so that they can provide opportunities for every student to develop their capabilities for success.

Relationships matter. In November, the PED held a three-day Statewide High School Town Hall meeting, facilitated by New Mexico First, on high school reform.

New Mexico First is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that hosts Town Halls on a variety of topics important to New Mexico. These Town Halls use a unique consensus-building process to obtain public policy recommendations from a broad range of citizenry.

Partnering with the PED to sponsor the Town Hall were the Commission on Higher

Education, the Legislative Education Study Committee, the Legislative Finance Committee, the New Mexico Association for Community Colleges, the New Mexico Association for Career and Technical Education, the New Mexico Coalition of School Administrators, the National Education Association, Albuquerque TVI, Rio Rancho schools, Portales schools, the Office of Education Accountability, The Education Center and the New Mexico Business Roundtable.

Attending were legislators, students, parents, high school principals, superintendents, higher education representatives, business leaders, tribal leaders and community members. High school students provided first-hand knowledge and out-of-the-box thinking that is so vital for revitalization and change.



Dr. V. Sue Cleveland, Superintendent,  
Rio Rancho Public Schools

Comprehensive reforms will be guided by informed decision-making based on data, research, best practices and the best thinking of educators and policymakers. A sampling from the town hall consensus document includes the following recommendations:



Dr. Pauline Rindone (third from bottom) of the Legislative Education Study Committee makes a point at the High School Town Hall

- Alignment of junior high/middle school curriculum with that of the high schools
- Outside of classroom learning, like service learning and work study
- Standards that are rigorous, updated for relevance and aligned among all levels of education
- Support for teacher professional development that includes skills training, modeling, mentoring, role playing, problem solving and quality processes
- Expect, encourage, motivate and provide welcoming opportunities for family involvement
- Shared accountability

- Develop a system that leverages resources, eliminates duplication of services and maximizes time, money and social capital
- Collaborate with postsecondary education
- The PED and Commission on Higher Education to provide resources and frameworks that build capacity and support student success.

We've learned that relevance matters. Consider that New Mexico has the lowest percentage in the nation of high school students (31%) who successfully complete Algebra II or higher. But the skills needed for many of today's good jobs require successful completion of four years of English and math, through Algebra II.

Making math relevant will better prepare our students for life and careers in the 21st Century. And the farther a student goes in math in high school, the better the chances that he or she will earn a college degree.

That's why the PED has developed a Math Action Plan. The PED is urging districts to offer Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II or their equivalents or higher to students to meet the three units of math needed to graduate from high school. New Mexico must come to a place where employers can trust that a high school graduate will have high school-level skills.

## Educational Enhancement

Bold moves are occurring to improve public education. These include the following:

- Full-day kindergarten (initiated in 2000), to ensure that every child is prepared to start first grade.
- Governor's Truancy Prevention Program (initiated in 2003), to provide pilot programs and strategies to prevent truancy. The PED is coordinating school health, truancy and bully-proofing programs with other state agencies.



- Increased focus on the needs of rural schools and Native American students. New divisions have been created at the PED for Indian and rural education.
- Improved computer access for middle school students. Governor Richardson's "New Mexico Laptop Learning Initiative" is providing laptops to seventh-grade students and their teachers and integrating technology into the learning process.
- Alternative education and accelerated learning opportunities. The PED has been recognized for establishing high-quality indicators of success in career and technical education. Ten million dollars were appropriated in 2004 to provide for the building needs for career technical-vocational education centers in the state. These centers will prepare students with the technical skills to succeed in a career -- such as health care, engineering, computer technology, business, automotive technology, construction or the hospitality or film industries -- and educationally.

In southern New Mexico, a unique apprenticeship program premiered in January 2005 that holds the potential for improving the region's economy, and becoming a model for other communities to follow.

The "Technical Bridge Apprenticeship Pilot Program" will provide 40 to 50 students from Gadsden and Santa Teresa High Schools in the Gadsden Independent Schools with the training necessary to enter a technical career in manufacturing.

Partners for the project are the Office of Governor, Office of Workforce Development, U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman, the PED, Gadsden schools, New Mexico State University, Dona Ana Branch Community College and Southwest Manufacturing Consortium. Instruction will take place at the community college campus in Las Cruces and its satellite campus in Anthony through concurrent enrollment offerings for 11th- and 12th-grade students.

### **Significant Education Reform Initiatives**

In addition, Governor Richardson launched a number of reform initiatives in 2004 that will impact our ability to raise student expectations, including the following:

- Middle College Dropout Prevention geared toward high-risk high school students, teaching them on the college campus
- Rural School Advanced Placement Acceleration Program to promote the program to students in rural areas through on-line courses and direct instruction and assist with exam fees
- Dropout prevention to provide culturally relevant materials and teaching strategies to reduce dropout rates among New Mexico's minorities
- And other initiatives, including bullying prevention and a Border Superintendent Leadership Institute.

### **Assessment and Accountability**

Somewhere along the line, public education in New Mexico fell behind. This didn't happen overnight, and we're not going to fix it overnight, but we must accelerate our efforts to improve. In 2004, increased accountability occurred across the state in communities large and small. In the summer, we celebrated substantial increases in student performance, across the board.

- In grade 4, student proficiency in math increased by five percent, and reading proficiency increased by four percent over 2003
- In grade 8, reading proficiency increased by six percent and math proficiency increased by three percent
- In grades 4 and 8, in both math and language arts, all ethnic subgroups made gains

- The same was true for students receiving free-or-reduced-price lunch, in special education and who were English Language Learners (ELL). In fact, in fourth-grade math, ELL student proficiency increased by eight percent, compared to four percent growth by non-ELL students
- In both fourth- and eighth-grades, in both math and reading, ELL growth exceeded that of non-ELL students.

Educators are hearing the message that the bar is rising for all students in New Mexico. And all does means all.

They know that it is unacceptable to see Native American proficiency in language arts, in fourth-grade, at 24% while Caucasians in the same grade and subject have 64% proficiency. Or to see 46% proficiency for Hispanics in math in grade four as compared to 71% proficiency by Asian students.

One of the great commonalities is poverty. In both math and language arts, in the fourth- and eighth-grades, those students who are economically disadvantaged face the greatest challenges. Another common thread is language. Just 20% of ELL students in eighth-grade math are at or above proficiency. These are obstacles. But at the PED, and in communities across the state, we're challenging our beliefs.

Principal Javier Milo of Martin Elementary in Deming is proving that these students can do better. He was recognized with a \$25,000 Milken Educator Award in October.

Deming schools' Superintendent Harvielee Moore calls Mr. Milo a "magnet of hope" who has created at Martin Elementary a "showcase for excellence." His school's dual language program is especially successful.

It includes a comprehensive reading program that addresses phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, text comprehension and application. Parents and students stand in line for entrance into his successful program.

Before he joined the staff as principal, Martin Elementary's bilingual students were struggling. The school has gone from being probationary in 2000, under the state's old accountability system, to meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the provisions of the federal *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001*. We must follow Mr. Milo's lead.



Javier Milo of Deming and Sheri Davis of Los Alamos, New Mexico's 2004 Milken Educators

## **Leave No Child Behind**

New Mexico is adhering to the requirements set forth in NCLB and state statute in the area of accountability. In 2004, the old accountability system was overhauled. The new system of accountability was developed with input from school districts and testing experts to ensure AYP status is accurate and completed by the beginning of school. It will premiere in the spring of 2005. The PED is providing public information and school district trainings to help usher in the new system. And it has resolved a three-year problem in contracts and funding for student testing.

In 2004, New Mexico joined a consortium of 15 other states to identify the true costs of NCLB. An independent scientific analysis will be available in early 2005. We are pleased to be seen as a national leader in completing cost estimates regarding NCLB.

While it is true that the federal government has provided for more flexibility in the use of funds, the reality is that direct services that might have been provided to children may end up redirected to meet NCLB requirements. For example, the PED is seeking adequate funds to meet NCLB demands.

Nonetheless, in 2004, for the first time, New Mexico determined the AYP status and NCLB designations for the state's public schools, based on criterion-referenced testing (CRT) in grades 4, 8 and 11. Of the state's 766 public schools, 519 are meeting AYP.

What we learned in 2004 was that the lowest-performing group of students or low participation on the CRTs may determine a school's AYP status. And schools that traditionally have experienced high performance may not meet AYP because of reasons unrelated to the schools' total performance. For example, 90% of students could be at proficiency but if only 94% of students took the test, the school is designated as having not met AYP. (Ninety-five percent are required under NCLB to participate.)

Too many of our schools did not meet AYP because of low student participation on the assessments. As communities, educators, parents, relatives and employers, we must stress the importance of our young people attending school.

To address some of these inequities, the PED secured approval from the U.S. Department of Education to change the New Mexico Accountability Workbook, the document that details how New Mexico will respond to NCLB requirements. And it sent a letter to the U.S. Secretary of Education requesting changes to make NCLB work better for students in New Mexico, especially in rural areas. The letter sought time extensions for rural schools to demonstrate progress before facing corrective action.

Because one of the greatest reasons test scores vary is the change in the groups of students tested, especially in our rural areas, the PED is looking at recommendations that will allow us to measure individual student growth. What we want to know is, “How did the instructional program offered to this group of students change its performance in meeting content standards and benchmarks?”

The PED also wants to recognize one student-one count. In some cases, students contribute to a school’s subpopulations ratings several times in NCLB. For example, a fourth-grade Hispanic student who is an English Language Learner and eligible for the free lunch program is counted four or five times.

We want to measure AYP in the same content areas. Schools should not be penalized for not meeting AYP unless and until they have two groups (disaggregated subgroups) in the same content area falling short of AYP.

We also want to allow for up to five years for graduation rates. The reality is that once a student falls behind academically, it is highly unlikely that she or he will graduate within eight total semesters. The student, then, counts against the school for failing to graduate within four years. Allowing the PED to recognize five-year graduation rates will show that many at-risk students do, in fact, graduate with a few extra semesters.

And we need to recognize special students, particularly those with disabilities who are not well served through the general assessment or alternate assessment system. They are either asked to take the alternate assessment that is too basic or are required to take a grade-level general assessment that is too advanced.

The PED has organized its assessment staff to accurately assess students and rate schools based upon performance targets, implement an extensive process to diagnose schools that do not meet AYP and focus staff resources in its Priority Schools Bureau for addressing corrective actions. This makes us responsible for educating all students, not just those who traditionally do well in school, including those who typically have not done very well in school.

### **School Improvement Framework**

In the fall, the PED launched a new, innovative approach to improving schools, called the School Improvement Framework. This approach offers struggling schools the assistance and support they need to succeed. The framework is directed at schools that have fallen behind because all students did not meet testing targets.

The framework ensures that schools needing to improve have aligned their resources -- state, federal and human -- to support their strategic plans, called Educational Plans for

Student Success or EPSS. Improving schools is not a one-size-fits-all effort. Schools' plans need to speak directly to their unique challenges.

One-third of New Mexico's schools need to improve. These schools have been designated for School Improvement I or II, Corrective Action or Restructuring I or II, based on the length of time they've fallen behind. The PED is committed to their success. Their failure, or failure by their school districts, is our failure.

Each designation requires specific responses from schools and school districts. The PED is working collaboratively and directly with these schools and districts to implement the requirements for each designation. Guiding its work is the belief that all schools have the capacity and talent to change.

For corrective action schools, it is developing diagnoses, prescriptions and school improvement plans. School districts are being included as integral education reform team members. For schools facing the greatest needs, called priority or Restructuring II schools, the PED has performed data reviews and conducted on-site diagnostic assessments.



The PED is tapping the state's creative, well-educated and talented people to create change. It's forming liaisons between successful schools and those needing to improve so that best practices can be shared. And it's planning a Best Practices Conference to share these successes with the state.

Issues have been identified that contribute to low student performance. Coaching and consultation to improve classroom instruction are being offered. And programs that do not help to resolve the unique learning issues in each school have been cut.

Some schools need to provide a different type of training to teachers on how instruction is delivered in the classroom. Some need to give quarterly tests to gauge student knowledge or do a better job of collecting data. Where needed, the PED is assuming greater control over local decision making.

If it's clear after a few years that structural change is appropriate, the PED will move in that direction. But not all schools, especially rural schools, can handle a staff restructuring. Not all, for example, have a pool of qualified teachers to fill openings. And the evidence is lacking that this type of drastic action will improve student outcomes.

Classroom to classroom, school to school, innovative support and assistance will improve schools and meet the needs of parents, children and school communities in New Mexico.

The school improvement framework is changing the status quo for children and ending the era of low expectations for New Mexico's schools.

The PED has also started the process of reviewing and revising content standards and benchmarks and building a statewide voluntary curriculum. The vision is to make a voluntary statewide curriculum available to districts in the core areas.

The curriculum will be focused on those standards (called Power Standards) that children most need to know and do in order to move to the next learning level. The goal is to finish development of the curriculum by August 2005. (The Governor is seeking legislative financing for this initiative.)

A voluntary statewide curriculum will benefit schools struggling with outdated curricula and ensure alignment between curriculum delivery in the classroom, state standards and test administration. The web-based curriculum will include suggested activities to teach the standards and ways of assessing students.

### **Physical Education and Obesity**

The prevalence of obesity is growing rapidly for children of all ages. At present, more than 15% of children over the age of six, or approximately nine million children, are obese. Childhood obesity involves significant and growing costs. Nationally, measured in terms of hospitalization alone, the fiscal impact of child and youth obesity more than tripled between 1970 and 2000.

Self-reported survey data for New Mexico indicate that at least 10.2% of high school students are overweight, with an additional 13.3% at risk for becoming overweight.

For children, the increasing prevalence of being overweight appears to be related to the lack of physical education and activity and poor nutritional habits. Physical inactivity appears to be related to television viewing and computer games. And poor nutrition is related to the increased consumption of fast food and sweetened beverages.

"PE teachers in every elementary school" is part of Governor Richardson's initiative for obesity prevention. This recommendation is also advocated in the Action for Healthy Kids Strategic Plan, by The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, The Chronic Disease Prevention Council and in the HM 28 Childhood Obesity Study of 2004.

With legislative approval, the PED will develop rules in 2005 governing food and beverages sold or distributed in public schools to students outside of school meal programs. And students will be taught health and physical education.

## Educator Quality

Seventy-seven percent of our public school classrooms in the core academic subjects are taught by highly qualified teachers. In high-poverty schools, the percentage is 71%. By the end of the 2005-2006 school year, New Mexico faces the challenge of increasing these percentages to 100%.

Over the past several years, teachers and policymakers have firmly resolved to challenge past beliefs and courageously move forward with new ones.

- The PED has established a uniform statewide standard of teacher evaluation and provided training for school principals and other administrators throughout the state. And it implemented the second phase of New Mexico's three-tiered licensure system and implemented requirements for the new Professional Development Dossier for licensure advancement.
- New Mexico's teacher supply has grown over the last four years, even as the student population has remained even or declined slightly. The Transition to Teaching program has been created to recruit more quality teachers in classrooms.
- Colleges and universities are putting people with bachelors' degrees in a content area on a fast track -- one and one-half years -- to teaching. The alternative licensure paths have probably produced about 600 new teachers in the last three years. With a population of around 21,000 working teachers, 600 new teachers is important.
- The Legislature provided for a back-to-work program for retired teachers and the PED has significantly liberalized interstate reciprocity, which has helped a lot. Now a teacher's years of experience in another state can count toward his or her placement in our three-tiered licensure system.
- And the number of substandard licenses in New Mexico is down. In 1999-2000, about 11% of our teachers were on such waivers. This past year, the percentage was 4.7%.



Improved salaries, accountability and professional development will ultimately improve the academic success of children in New Mexico. But we must continue to recruit more teachers for special education and bilingual education.

## **Rural Education**

Governor Richardson recognized the unique needs of the state's rural schools and promised voters that he would appoint a person at the PED dedicated to rural education. As a result, the PED established in 2004 a Rural Education Division that specializes in providing assistance to small and isolated school districts.

The Rural Education Division has been active in attempting to secure a legislative appropriation to conduct a study of the Public School Funding Formula in order to assess the formula's equity as it relates to rural districts. The division has also conducted a series of regional summits on issues facing rural districts and meetings to discuss the expansion of services provided by Regional Education Cooperatives (RECs). Furthermore, the division has built partnerships with national and international experts in rural education to identify approaches that can benefit New Mexico's rural students, schools and communities.

The PED's future vision for rural education includes the development and implementation of a comprehensive action plan, institutionalizing consensus recommendations for the RECs and increasing access to specialized courseware through distance-education networks.

## **Charter Schools**

With the number of charter schools increasing to a possible 60 next year, it's clear that the charter schools movement is growing. The PED is seeking to increase charter school accountability by moving the chartering authority from local boards to the PED.

It's also looking at increased technical assistance to charter schools, particularly in the area of finance. In November, Secretary Dr. García upheld the Albuquerque Public Schools' August revocation of the charter for Paseo del Monte Charter Middle School. Financial concerns were among the reasons for her decision to uphold the district's decision.

The PED received \$6.1 million in grant funding for 2004-2005, under the U.S. Department of Education's Public Charter Schools Program, to help create more successful examples of charter schools and share information on how charter schools work. This award is the second installment of a three-year grant.

To ensure charter schools succeed and continue to grow, we must support them in their first critical years. This funding will help us increase the number of high-quality charter schools in New Mexico and build on school improvement efforts already underway. Overall in New Mexico, charter schools are running smoothly and are offering exciting alternatives for parents and students. ■

## **2004/2005—MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION**

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