This report informs a series of community engagement activities associated with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Community members are urged to read this report before attending a local forum or taking the online ESSA survey.

Community meetings
- Gallup: October 12
- Farmington: October 14
- Santa Fe: October 17
- Albuquerque: October 18
- Roswell: October 27
- Las Cruces: November 15

OUTREACH CONVENER
New Mexico Public Education Department

FACILITATOR AND RESEARCHER
New Mexico First
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Providing all New Mexico children with a quality education is the key to our state’s future. New Mexicans want children to receive the education that allows them to fulfill their potential, pursue their dreams, achieve their goals, support themselves and their families, and contribute to their communities. However, challenges exist.

About every 20 years, the nation begins a new chapter in reforming our education system. The most recent chapter is the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the new law governing K-12 education. Replacing "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB), ESSA enables students, teachers, administrators, policymakers and community leaders to contribute ideas on refining the state education systems to better support students and educators.

The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) will convene a series of six regional meetings in fall 2016 to solicit input about the development of the state’s ESSA plan to support student learning. The department contracted with the nonpartisan, nonprofit New Mexico First to prepare this backgrounder and facilitate the meetings. (See appendix for additional engagement opportunities.)

NEW MEXICO STUDENTS

Improving our education system continues to be critical for New Mexico as the state continues to rank near the bottom in the U.S. for student performance, scoring among the lowest math and reading scores in the nation. By 2020, most New Mexico students will not have the education, credentials or degrees required to fill 63 percent of the state’s jobs. However, parents, educators and policymakers have reason to be encouraged as New Mexico made gains in student test scores for math and reading and since 2003 more students are graduating high school.

ESSA HISTORY AND REQUIREMENTS

The new law requires that by summer 2017 all states submit to the U.S. Department of Education their plan for implementation of ESSA. Most ESSA provisions will take effect for the 2017-2018 school year.

ESSA maintains the previous requirements that states, districts and schools maintain a uniform measurement of student performance allowing for comparisons among schools, student groups and individual students over time, reporting of results and support for teachers and schools. However, states and districts have greater discretion to design elements to transform and improve the state education system than existed under NCLB, including substantial resources for teacher and educator professional development.

Specific areas for reform under ESSA include:

- School accountability and report cards
- Student assessment and graduation requirements
- Identification and support for English language learners
- Support for low-performing schools (including funding flexibility for Title I)
- Support and evaluation of teachers and school leaders (including funding flexibility under Title II)
- State education report cards

Additional focus areas for ESSA include required outreach and input from stakeholders including:

- Parental participation
- Authentic engagement with tribal governments and communities
- Thoughtful inclusion and support of rural school districts
- Educator input

For all stakeholders, communication is critical to overcoming the challenges students and schools face. Stakeholders urge that information about ESSA and how it will be implemented in New Mexico be transparent, accessible, applicable and consistently provided. By working together, all stakeholders can meet the needs of our students.
FOREWORD

Purpose of the Community Meetings
The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is the primary law governing K-12 education in the United States. Passed in December 2015, the new law replaces the previous federal education policy known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Throughout the country, states are holding public meetings about ESSA – providing an opportunity to engage with students, educators, district leaders, families and the community for input on how to continuously refine education systems.

The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) partnered with New Mexico First to convene a series of six regional meetings throughout the state in fall 2016 to solicit input about New Mexico’s ESSA plan to support schools and student learning. New Mexico First will also issue an online survey for people unable to attend a community meeting. This report is meant to help inform and elicit in-depth ideas among community meeting participants and survey respondents.

Who Should Attend a Community Meeting?
Essentially, anyone interested in the future success of New Mexico students can take part in these meetings! The state especially hopes to hear from:

- Teachers, school and district administrators
- Parents and families
- Community, tribal and civic leaders
- Business and economic development leaders
- State and local elected officials
- School board members

What Happens at the Meetings?
These meetings provide participants a chance to learn about ESSA and share with PED their priorities, expectations and concerns helping PED set informed goals and expectations for our public education system. There will be a brief opening session to set the context for the meetings, but the bulk of the meetings will be comprised of small group discussions among participants who want to contribute to the success of New Mexico students.

What Happens After the Meetings?
Following the regional meeting series, PED will use the input received to inform the development of its plan for improving education in New Mexico. According to PED, participants’ suggestions will play an important role in guiding the state public education system to better support our students and teachers. Suggestions will also inform which aspects of New Mexico’s existing system should be retained or revised.

Convener
The ESSA community meetings series is convened by the NM Public Education Department (PED). The PED serves as New Mexico’s State Education Agency (SEA) and provides oversight to New Mexico’s Local Education Agencies (LEAs). The series is funded by the Council of Chief State School Officers and administered by HCM Strategists, LLC.
Facilitator and Researcher
New Mexico First engages people in important issues facing their state or community. Established in 1986, the public policy organization offers unique town halls and forums that bring together people from all walks of life to develop their best ideas for policymakers and the public. New Mexico First also produces nonpartisan public policy reports on critical issues facing the state. These reports – on topics like education, healthcare, the economy, water and energy – are available at nmfirst.org.

Our state’s two U.S. Senators, Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, serve as New Mexico First’s honorary co-chairs. The organization was co-founded in 1986 by retired U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman and Pete Domenici.

Where Do We Get Our Information?
This New Mexico First report was prepared by Pamela Blackwell and Heather Balas. Throughout this document, we provide as many data sources as possible. We draw from published reports, newspaper and journal articles, first-hand interviews, legislative hearings and online resources. We know that policymakers, researchers and students use our reports, so we provide the details they need to learn more – and answer further questions. Footnotes provide short-references to complete citations in the bibliography.

A special thanks goes to those interviewed for this report: Amanda Aragon, PED; Ellen Burnstein, Albuquerque Teachers Federation; Vicki Chavez, NM Regional Education Cooperatives Association; Alicia Duran, PED Teacher Liaison; Chris Eide, Teach Plus; Ian Esquibel, The Learning Alliance; Latifah Phillips, PED; Liz Ross, HCM Strategies; Gloria Ruiz, PED; Christopher Ruszkowski, PED; Renata Witte, NM Parent Teacher Association.
Chapter 1:
NEW MEXICO STUDENTS

Student Achievement and Readiness
As a whole, New Mexico students face many challenges. A fifth of the state’s population lives in poverty, ranking the state the second worst in the nation. In addition, over two-thirds of the New Mexico’s students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. Research shows that 42 percent of young people born to families in the lowest fifth of income distribution will remain there. For these young people, educational attainment beyond the high school diploma may offer the only means of moving up the economic ladder.

Since higher levels of educational attainment typically correspond to higher incomes, there is a direct correlation with increased economic activity of individuals and businesses. This is why the educational attainment of a population is a common starting point in evaluating the workforce’s capacity to contribute to economic growth. By 2020, most New Mexico students will not have the education, credentials or degrees required to fill 63 percent of New Mexico’s jobs.

How are New Mexico Students Doing?
The New Mexico K-12 education system serves over 330,000 students through 89 school districts and 96 charter schools. The state ranks near the bottom in the U.S. for student performance, scoring among the lowest in math and reading in the nation. However, parents, educators and policymakers have reason to be encouraged because New Mexico has made gains in student test scores and increased high school graduation rates since 2003. Since 2012, when school grading first began in New Mexico, the number of schools receiving an A or B grade has increased so that there are now more schools with an A or B grade than those with a D or F grade. This increase equates to 30,000 more students having access to A or B schools.

The current student assessment testing system, Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), has been in use for two years. In 2016, New Mexico PARCC test scores in reading increased by 1.3 percent. Of New Mexico’s 89 school districts (64 percent), 57 showed gains on the tests. About 5,000 more New Mexico students are now on grade level than in 2015. In addition, 3,239 more Hispanic students and 4,061 more economically disadvantaged students are proficient in reading compared to 2015. Native American students showed the highest rate of growth in reading.

New Mexico students also saw an increase in their math PARCC scores. In 2016, students’ scores in math increased by 2.5 percent. With 77 school districts (86 percent) showing gains in math, 7,300 more students now perform on
grade level than in 2015.\textsuperscript{13} Elementary students showed the most improvement in math and Hispanic students showed positive gains in all grade levels.

Overall, economically disadvantaged students exceeded statewide growth rates in both reading and math. Schools that participate in the state’s Principals Pursuing Excellence (PPE) program also saw a marked increase above the state average, in the number of students proficient in reading and math (4.24\% increase in math, 4.87\% increase in reading). The PPE program is a two-year program targeted to 84 low-performing New Mexico schools that supports principals to improve student achievement in their schools.\textsuperscript{14} The success of PPE schools provides an example of an innovative transformative model that could be expanded and applied to other schools.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{WHAT IS PARCC?}

In elementary, middle, and high school, New Mexico students take the PARCC test. The PARCC test is a nationally recognized standardized test developed by a consortium of teachers, administrators and other experts from eight states including New Mexico, and the District of Columbia. The BIE and the U.S. Department of Defense administer the tests and also participate at varying levels in the development of the PARCC tests. The PARCC tests are designed to measure how well students understand and are able to apply the skills and standards under the Common Core State Standards which cover reading, English and math. The tests are also designed to provide educators with a deeper understanding of how students learn. ESSA requires that 95\% of students are assessed annually using the state’s designated student assessment. All students in New Mexico, with some exceptions for students with disabilities or who may be English learners, must by law take the PARCC test, and all high school students must pass the PARCC test or alternative test to graduate.

\textbf{Additional New Mexico Student Indicators}

Below are additional indicators that measure student academic achievement for New Mexico K-12 students statewide.

\textbf{INDICATOR: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TRUANCY}

Studies have shown that students who are chronically absent, meaning they miss 10 days or more of the school year due to excused or unexcused absences, are at risk academically, particularly in the early grades. These absences result in loss of instructional time, which translates into weaker reading skills. Attendance habits begin at home. Schools also play a role; student attendance is better in schools where parents feel welcomed and engaged.\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{nm_elementary_school_truancy.png}
\caption{NM Elementary School Truancy Rate}
\end{figure}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} (NM Public Education Department, 2016)
\item \textsuperscript{14} (Priority Schools Bureau, NMPED)
\item \textsuperscript{15} (Christopher Ruszkowski, 2016)
\item \textsuperscript{16} (NM Public Education Department, 2016)
\item \textsuperscript{17} (Attendance Works, 2014)
\end{itemize}
BACKGROUND REPORT: Community Outreach on ESSA Implementation

INDICATOR: READING PROFICIENCY
Children who read well are more likely to perform well in other subjects, such as math and science. Strong reading skills also predict the likelihood of graduating from high school and attending college, as well as securing employment and earning better wages. The percent of fourth grade and eighth grade students in New Mexico who are proficient readers has remained about the same over the last decade with an increase of 1.25 percent for fourth grade and an increase of 2.89 percent for eighth grade between 2015 and 2016. This equates to 478 more fourth grade students and 917 more eighth grade students reading at grade level.

INDICATOR: MATH PROFICIENCY
Competence in mathematics is the strongest predictor of long-term academic success. It is also essential in an increasingly technology-based world and workplace. Students with strong math skills are more likely to attend and complete college. Math proficiency is also related to higher levels of employability and influences higher levels of

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18 (Child Trends, 2014)
19 (NM Public Education Department, 2016)
20 (NM Public Education Department, 2016)
21 (NM Public Education Department, 2016)
22 (NM Public Education Department, 2016)
23 (Gulbrandsen, 2011)
earnings.\textsuperscript{24} New Mexico made excellent progress in student math scores in the last decade, although 8th grade proficiency took a small dip in 2014.\textsuperscript{25} (Chart sources: \textsuperscript{26} \textsuperscript{27})

**INDICATOR: ACADEMIC PROFICIENCY BY RACE/ETHNICITY**

Achievement gaps matter, particularly when the educational disparities affect such large segments of the population. New Mexico schools consistently see double-digit gaps in academic proficiency. The following chart provides one example, fourth grade math where the gap is about 37 percentage points. As of 2013, similar gaps exist in fourth grade reading (31 percentage point gap between highest and lowest achieving groups), eighth grade reading (30 percentage point gap), and eighth grade math (29 percentage point gap).\textsuperscript{28}

Indicators disaggregated by race and ethnicity help to measure how well schools are ensuring that all students are learning. The indicators identify which groups of students are not achieving at the same rate as their peers so the school and districts can then take action to address this inequity. That states work to ensure that all students are learning is a key requirement of ESSA. According to PED, the department expected a drop in student test scores in 2015 due to teachers and students having to become accustomed to how the tests are given, a heightened concern about the then new assessment in general and because PARCC assessment content is considered more challenging than previous student assessments.

**INDICATOR: HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE**

High school graduation usually leads to higher earnings for individuals, and greater productivity and economic growth for their communities. The median earnings of individuals with a high school diploma, even with no additional education, are roughly 40 percent higher than earnings of those who do not finish school.\textsuperscript{31} As the following two charts show, New Mexico’s overall high school graduation rate has climbed over the last decade, reaching 69 percent in 2014. We still fall short of the national average of 81 percent. New Mexico’s graduation rates were the lowest among neighboring states, where 75 to 88 percent of students graduate.\textsuperscript{32} Further, until

\textsuperscript{24} (Child Trends, 2014)  
\textsuperscript{25} (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015)  
\textsuperscript{26} (NM Public Education Department, 2016)  
\textsuperscript{27} (NM Public Education Department, 2016)  
\textsuperscript{28} (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015)  
\textsuperscript{29} (NM Public Education Department, 2016)  
\textsuperscript{30} (NM Public Education Department, 2016)  
\textsuperscript{31} (Promising Practices Network, 2015)  
\textsuperscript{32} (Governing: States and Localities, n.d.)
2016 the gap between ethnic groups was not closing. To graduate, New Mexico students must demonstrate competence in core subject areas by passing PARCC or alternative tests and must also complete the required number of credit hours.

**What Do Students Want?**

Students want to learn the relevant skills that get them a job, preparing them for tomorrow’s careers, according to Ian Esquibel, executive director of the Learning Alliance. The Learning Alliance is a New Mexico nonprofit that supports the educational needs of students and families. Much of this report focuses on education reform from the perspective of what adults would like in our education system. However, it seems important to consider the perspectives and concerns of students as well. The Learning Alliance reports that its student leaders want student-centric implementation of ESSA in which their voice is valued and where adult issues do not impede student success. One of the ideas unique to students is the suggestion by some students that early in their education starting in middle school or earlier, that each student is assigned a guide to continually orient them to the education and career path system that is foreign to so many young people.

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33 (NM Public Education Department, n.d.)
34 (Governing: States and Localities, n.d.)
35 (NM Public Education Department, n.d.)
36 (Esquibel, Executive Director, The Learning Alliance, 2016)
37 (Esquibel, Executive Director, The Learning Alliance, 2016)
Chapter 2:
ESSA HISTORY AND REQUIREMENTS

History of Federal Education Acts
The 1965 passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) signaled the federal government’s commitment to and involvement in quality and equality in the schooling offered students in the U.S.\(^{38}\) In 2002, passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act reauthorized ESEA, this time requiring that schools measure student achievement in uniform ways allowing for comparisons among districts, schools, student groups and individual students over time. The new law also required that states intervene to address achievement gaps between disadvantaged students and their peers.

For the first time in U.S history, NCLB clearly quantified how many of our nation’s students were academically “proficient” — including which schools were delivering that level of preparedness for all types of students.\(^{39}\) Where many people believe NCLB fell short was in its unrealistic goal that every child must perform at grade level in reading and math by 2014, and that all schools could be fixed using the same tool box. Multiple reports indicate that these factors frustrated teachers and administrators alike.\(^{40}\)

The new ESSA law, enacted in 2015, retains the NCLB requirements that states, districts and schools maintain uniform measurement of student performance allowing for comparisons among schools, student groups and individual students over time, reporting of results, and measurement of teacher and school effectiveness. However, states and districts have greater discretion to design some elements of their state plans. The new law also allows for substantial resources for teacher and educator professional development as well as teacher recruitment and retention.

The stated purpose of ESSA is to ensure that all children in all communities graduate from high school ready for college and career.

NCLB WAIVERS – A RUNNING START?
Under NCLB, New Mexico and 42 other states chose to operate under “waivers” that allowed flexibility regarding some requirements. This flexibility came in exchange for rigorous state-developed plans to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity and improve quality of instruction.\(^{41}\) Under this system, New Mexico developed its current student assessment, school report cards and educator evaluation systems.

Officials at PED report that New Mexico’s 2012 decision to comply with NCLB under the more rigorous waiver program means that the state is closer today to complying with the new ESSA requirements than many states. Proposed regulations under ESSA mirror much of what New Mexico is already doing. For educators in particular, this may mean they have already experienced the large scale changes that other states have yet to go through. In addition, PED reports that it has already assembled staff-expertise to refine assessment systems and analyze data.\(^{42}\)

\(^{38}\) (Turner C., 2015)
\(^{39}\) (Turner C., 2015)
\(^{40}\) (Turner C., 2015)
\(^{41}\) (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.)
\(^{42}\) (Ruszkowski, 2016)
BACKGROUND REPORT: Community Outreach on ESSA Implementation

ESSA Implementation Timeline
By summer 2017, all states must submit to the U.S. Department of Education their plan for implementation of ESSA. State education departments including PED are using the 2016-2017 school year for planning and transition as well as for stakeholder outreach and engagement. State education departments are also required to conduct stakeholder outreach and engagement throughout the planning and implementation phases. (See Appendix for stakeholder outreach opportunities offered through PED.) It is anticipated that final regulations on ESSA compliance (informed by comments submitted by the public throughout the nation), will be published by December of 2016. Most new ESSA provisions will take effect for the 2017-2018 school year.

ESSA Requirements and Opportunities
Much of the new law is similar to NCLB. As noted above, however, some differences exist including with the following relevant to community discussions in New Mexico:

- School accountability and report cards
- Student assessment and graduation requirements
- Identification and support for English language learners
- Support for low-performing schools
- Support and evaluation of teachers and school leaders
- State education report cards

School Report Cards and Low-Performing Schools
Under ESSA, schools must track and report on at least the following five indicators:

1. Proficiency on statewide tests in English language arts and math
2. Growth in proficiency or another academic indicator that can be broken out by subgroup
3. English language proficiency (a new requirement)
4. High school graduation rates
5. A fifth “other” indicator of school quality such as student engagement, educator engagement or school climate/safety

Like NCLB, ESSA also requires that states identify their lowest performing schools using a school grading system. States must also provide targeted support for the following low-performing schools with the following characteristics.

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43 (U.S. Department of Education, 2016)
44 (Education Commission of the States, 2016)
45 (Scott D. Jones, 2016)
46 (Tamara Hiler, 2015)
BACKGROUND REPORT: Community Outreach on ESSA Implementation

- High schools in which the graduation rate is consistently less than 67 percent
- The lowest performing five percent of schools in the state
- Schools in which there is a consistent performance gap between subgroups within the same school (e.g. Student Group A representing a race/ethnicity consistently underperforms compared to Student Group B representing a different race/ethnicity.)

IMPROVEMENTS FOR NEW MEXICO
New Mexico currently has a school and district grading system with published school report cards. That system tracks all the five required indicators except English language proficiency. The PED proposes public and educator input on the English proficiency requirement.

Regarding low-performing schools, ESSA provides for greater flexibility on any “turn-around strategies.” These decisions and the responsibility for interventions will first be driven by the schools and districts.47 Under ESSA, the PED’s role is to provide guidance during the turn-around planning process, ensure that the school improvement plans include evidence-based interventions and provide final approval of the plans.48 Unlike under NCLB, ESSA does not prescribe interventions a school must use to turn it around giving communities some room to innovate.

Student Performance, Growth Assessments and Coursework
Like NCLB, ESSA requires that students take standardized tests to measure progress. However, the new law allows greater flexibility in the selection of the assessment tool. States may use some combination of PARCC, computer-adaptive assessments, SAT, ACT or other nationally recognized assessments.49 A limited number of states may also apply to develop their own assessment system, but the efforts must be self-funded and meet the same requirements as traditional assessments.

Another change under ESSA reduces the emphasis on standardized “proficiency” measures; instead states will be allowed to also gauge progress by measuring student academic growth. This change is in response to educators’ criticism that while a student attaining grade-level proficiency is important, a better measure is whether a student is growing in their knowledge and making progress over time. (For example, under a proficiency standard, a school would measure whether a third grader knows specific math concepts; under a growth standard, the same school would gauge how much that third grader’s understanding of math measurably improved over the year.)

Increased course options for students present another set of ESSA reforms. Previously, educators expressed concerns that NCLB’s primary focus on math and reading prevented students from receiving the well-rounded education they need for career readiness. Parents and educators also pointed out the value of other courses (like music or technology) to keeping students engaged in school.50 Answering these concerns, ESSA allows schools to be evaluated on whether students are provided with a well-rounded education through access to advanced coursework and workplace readiness opportunities and by also expanding the definition of “core academic subjects” to include the humanities, arts and social sciences.51 The new law also provides additional funds to support science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs.52

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47 (Tamara Hiler, 2015)
48 (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2016)
49 (Education Commission of the States, 2016) Note: computer-adaptive assessments are tailored tests that adjust the difficulty of questions based on the student’s response. Generally, if a student answers a question correctly, the next question will be harder; if a student answers incorrectly, the next question will be easier.
50 (Blair, 2015)
51 (Scott D. Jones, 2016)
52 (U.S. Department of Education, 2016)
IMPACTS FOR NEW MEXICO

Beginning in 2015, New Mexico students in grades 3-11 began taking the nationally normed PARCC exams. This set of computer-based assessments are intended to measure whether students are on track for college or careers. New Mexico is one of 11 states using PARCC, and our students are among roughly five million nationally taking the exams. Given the considerable effort by the state, districts and schools to get the effort off the ground, PED recommends that New Mexico remain with PARCC as our ESSA-approved assessment. Presuming that PARCC will continue to be the state’s assessment, this approach will likely require some additional investments; several rural and tribal schools reported challenges with the computer-based model, reporting challenges with hardware and internet speed.

Beginning in 2016, most New Mexico students are required to pass the PARCC test to graduate from high school. Students who do not pass PARCC may still earn a high school diploma by meeting an “alternative demonstrations of competency” (ADC). ESSA allows states the flexibility to develop ADCs for students who do not pass their high school assessment exam. In New Mexico, PED invites input on the development of ADCs. (See appendix for additional engagement opportunities.)

English Learners

The new law contains several changes affecting students whose first language is not English, including changing the preferred terminology to “English learners” (ELs). State accountability systems and report cards are required to measure student progress and proficiency for ELs. States must also give English proficiency and math assessments to English learners in their first year in U.S. schools. The law provides options for how states include EL students in their overall accountability data, enabling them to be phased in over time and as their English improves.

IMPACTS FOR NEW MEXICO

Our state’s population includes many cultures and people with different linguistic backgrounds. Albuquerque Public Schools estimates that about one-fifth of its students are English learners. Many of these students hold tremendous academic potential, given the proven developmental benefits of bilingualism. However, they often require additional support in the classroom to achieve that potential.

New Mexico’s “Educator Equity Plan,” approved by the U.S. Department of Education in 2015, provides some direction in this regard. It calls for targeted training and cultural competency for New Mexico teachers. Further, Article XII of the state constitution calls on the legislature to provide for the training of teachers “so that they may become proficient in both the English and Spanish languages, to qualify them to teach Spanish-speaking pupils and students in the public schools and educational institutions of the state…”

Parents are key to addressing this goal, yet many are English learners themselves. It is critical that their voices are valued as highly as that of other parents. (To that end, interpretation services are offered at ESSA community meetings if requested, and the online parent survey will be posted at www.nmfirst.org in Spanish and English.)

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53 PARCC (like ACT or SAT) generally goes by acronym; it stands for Partnership of Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers. Sample exams are posted at https://parcc.pearson.com/practice-tests/.
54 (NM Public Education Department, 2014)
55 (Albuquerque Public Schools, n.d.)
56 (Education Commission of the States, 2016), (Education Trust, 2016)
57 (Witte, 2016)
The PED invites suggestions for including English learner indicators in state and school report cards, preparing teachers to support EL students, and meeting the needs of students and their families in communities. (See appendix for additional engagement opportunities.)

**Support and Evaluation of Teachers and School Leaders**

Under previously granted NCLB waivers, states developed mandatory teacher and school leader evaluation systems. This requirement is removed under ESSA, but instead states are “permitted” to implement evaluation systems. The federal government is prohibited from prescribing evaluation measures, and states with evaluation systems are required to make the public aware of the criteria they use.58

The new law also requires that state and local report cards include the professional qualifications of teachers (i.e., the number who are “inexperienced,” teaching with emergency credentials, or teaching out of subject). This measure points to the need for high quality, content-based and sustained professional development, and ESSA provides for that. States may use federal education funding for a wide array of teacher support programs including mentoring, targeted training, teacher academies, and STEM master teaching, etc.59

**IMPACTS FOR NEW MEXICO**

New Mexico has a teacher evaluation system that was launched in the 2013-2014 school year. The system aims to identify effective and ineffective educators. Teachers are evaluated using multiple measures to help assess how well they prepare students. These measures include student growth, principal observations, student surveys and teacher attendance.60 The evaluation is also intended to identify where a teacher may need assistance. The PED proposes to continue the teacher evaluation system under ESSA.

Preliminary interviews conducted for this report indicate that some teachers would propose changes. While teachers overall want to be evaluated – and agree that ineffective educators should be provided additional training or removed from the classroom – teacher advocates express concerns about the current system. They report frustration that when questions about the data in a teacher’s evaluation arise, teachers are unsure of where to go for more information. More information and direction regarding addressing these and other variables might help to improve some teachers’ confidence in the evaluation process.

Regardless what process is deployed for teacher evaluation, appropriate professional development is key in New Mexico. Teacher advocates warn that some previous efforts were seen as punitive rather than supportive, or not structured to meet teachers’ needs. They hold that infrequent, one-size-fits-all teacher workshops do little more than “check the box.” Advocates suggest that professional development should be site specific, job embedded so that it is a daily part of a teacher’s workday, and ongoing so that the teacher may have support necessary from school year to school year.61

Programs such as TeachNM which provides online information and resources for teachers and administrators and is supported by PED, and Teach Plus which offers a competitive education policy fellowship program for New Mexico teachers, may provide models worthy of consideration.

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58 (Education Commission of the States, 2016)
59 (Education Commission of the States, 2016)
60 (NM Public Education Department, 2014)
61 (Burnstein, 2016)
State Report Cards

New Mexico does not currently publish a statewide report card, but under ESSA it will. State report cards must now also be designed based on input from parents. In addition to providing data on students based on race, gender and economic status as required under NCLB, states must now also report information on the performance of all students and all subgroups including homeless, military dependent and foster-care students. The state report card will also provide data on all the variables presented in the previous sections. Some additional requirements include:

- Schools identified for improvement and targeted support plans
- Preschool programs
- Access to advanced coursework, such as advanced placement or dual credit
- Chronic absenteeism
- Per pupil expenditures

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62 (Scott D. Jones, 2016)
Chapter 3:

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the issues and topics specified in the last chapter, common sense dictates consideration of a few more items. Stakeholders agree that, working together, New Mexico can bring equitable, quality education to all students. They also agree that ESSA provides a unique opportunity to advance that goal.

Parents as a Valued Voice
Parents unquestionably play a critical role in the well-being and education of their children. Advocates interviewed for this report said the many parents do not understand the role of student assessments. For example, some parents do not realize that choosing for their young child to opt-out of PARCC testing can contribute to her or him being less prepared to pass the test in high school (which is a graduation requirement), or that opting-out can have a negative impact how their child’s teacher is evaluated or their school’s grade.

For these reasons and others, parent advocates suggest that ESSA implementation include as direct, transparent and evenly delivered communication with parents as possible, providing opportunities for meaningful feedback from all parents.

Parents who interested in learning more and contributing to the development of education plans for their community can access the online Family and School Community Toolkit created by PED.

Tribal Education Systems
New Mexico’s tribal communities face unique opportunities and challenges. Many tribes, in addition to the day-to-day management of their school systems, are simultaneously deliberating on how to best provide their students with an education system. They want that system to leads to student success while also reflecting culture, language and values.

In addition to these philosophical issues, tribal schools face practical challenges. Many are governed by two education systems that are not necessarily aligned: PED and the federal Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). The BIE governs tribal schools in 23 states including New Mexico. One example of an alignment issue is that students in tribal schools located in New Mexico take the PARCC tests, but it is unclear how they are performing compared to their in-state peers because their scores are compared with only BIE school students. Also, while many tribal students begin their education in BIE tribal run schools, most eventually attend non-tribal schools overseen by PED making assessment of students throughout their education an additional alignment challenge to overcome.

While 99 percent of New Mexico students took the PARCC assessment online in 2016, resources for appropriate infrastructure such as reliable online broadband connectivity in tribal schools is also a concern. For example, some students in tribal communities were reportedly unable to effectively take the PARCC tests because they did not have reliable technology to take the online tests. Currently there is a statewide broadband initiative underway to better connect rural and tribal as well as urban communities.

Tribal advocates interviewed for this report hope that ESSA will bring resources to align and support tribal education standards that are specifically customized for tribal communities. They recommend that those making education policy decisions consistently engage and seek input from tribal communities.

61 (Phillips, 2016)
Rural Access and Local Community Support

Many rural New Mexico school districts feel that they do not have the training and resources to implement ESSA, having been previously frustrated at attempting to comply with NCLB waiver requirements. Advocates for rural districts suggest that New Mexico support an ESSA implementation rural delivery model that is local and trusted and that can consistently provide day-to-day instructional training and technical assistance.64 Advocates also suggest that the delivery model include teacher recruitment and retention pipeline support specifically for rural areas.

Questions for Consideration

Given the information presented in this background report there are excellent options for education policy discussions. Questions to consider for these discussions may include:

GENERAL
• What is working well/not working well in your school and school district?
• What are the characteristics or qualities you envision for your school and school district?
• What are the strengths of New Mexico’s education system?
• What are the opportunities for improvement to New Mexico’s education system?
• What non-technical aspects of the education system can be improved? (e.g. one-page versus multiple page reports, additional explanation for items in student assessments, etc.)

STUDENTS
• Are there other ways we can ensure all students are successful?
• How should we ensure more students are graduating?
• What are additional ways to demonstrate Alternative Demonstrations of Competency (ADCs)?
• What is the best way to integrate the new required indicator of English language proficiency?
• How can we ensure the success of English learners?

TEACHER SUPPORT
• How do we best support teachers so that they and their students are successful?
• How can educators, schools and districts use evaluations and report cards as tools to improve student and school performance?

COMMUNITIES
• How can we ensure that rural districts have the training and resources they need?
• What would it take to better align education systems and provide resources for tribal communities?

COMMUNICATION
• What is the best way for students, parents, teachers and administrators to receive information about their students, schools, policy changes and guidance, and who should deliver that information?
• What are the best ways and optimal frequency for students, parents, teachers and administrators to provide feedback for improving the education system?

64 (Chavez, 2016)
CONCLUSION

Implementation of ESSA provides an opportunity for education stakeholders to continue to work together to provide all New Mexico children with a quality education that will shape their future and our states economic future, allowing students to reach their full potential. Overwhelmingly, interviewees consulted for this report called for quality coordination and communication among stakeholders. This includes information that is transparent, informative, accessible, appropriate, applicable and consistently provided.

While our challenges are real, New Mexico has an abundance of students, parents, teachers, administrators and community leaders that care, that have the desire and ideas to innovate and refine our education system, and who aim to provide lasting benefits for our children for decades to come.
Appendix:

PED STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

ESSA – Stakeholder Outreach Opportunities through PED

DIRECT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Partnering with New Mexico First to host a series of 7 community meetings throughout the state
School visits with principals and community leaders
Consultation with Tribal leaders

ENGAGING OUR EDUCATORS
Teacher Summit
Teach Plus Cohort
Community meetings with teachers
Title IIA meetings
Secretary’s Teacher Advisory

VIRTUAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Online Survey via New Mexico First
State Plan to be posted online for public comment
PED ESSA Website
Title IV Surveys for Educators and Community Leaders

ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITIES FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS
Future Ready: Improving Graduation Requirements
Opportunity to Learn: Accountability
LESC Working Group
Title III: Improving Outcomes for ELL Students

ESSA provides New Mexico the opportunity to re-engage with students, educators, district leaders, families, and the community for input on how to continuously refine New Mexico’s education system to better support our teachers and students. Source: PED (2016)
Bibliography


Christopher Ruszkowski, M. P. (Performer). (2016, September 14). PED Testimony to Legislative Education Study Committee. Legislative Education Study Committee.


BACKGROUND REPORT: Community Outreach on ESSA Implementation


