



New Mexico Rising

Engaging our Communities for Excellence in Education

FINAL SUMMARY REPORT

This report presents results from the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) regional community meetings held fall 2016.

CONVENER

New Mexico Public Education Department

FACILITATOR

New Mexico First

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New Mexico students have made gains in test scores for math and reading, and recently more students are graduating from high school. These achievements, while positive, have not yet moved the state's near-bottom ranking in the U.S. for student performance including some of the lowest math and reading scores in the nation.

Providing all New Mexico children with a quality education is the key to our state's future. In a continuing effort to ensure better student outcomes, the federal government passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This new law replaces the federal law "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) in governing K-12 education.

The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) convened 20 regional meetings throughout the state in Gallup, Farmington, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Rowell and Las Cruces as well as Tribal Government to Government sessions, to solicit input about how to best implement the state's ESSA plan to support student learning. The PED partnered with the nonpartisan, nonprofit New Mexico First to facilitate the meetings.

Participants received information on main areas of potential ESSA reform: school accountability and report cards; student assessment and coursework requirements; English language learners; support for low-performing schools; support and evaluation of teachers and other school leaders. Keeping those main topics in mind, participants were asked what was working well in their school or district, not working well, and how to improve.

Three facilitated sessions occurred at each of the regional meetings, with one of the three sessions tailored for teachers. Approximately 650 people attended the meetings held in fall 2016. Participants represented a diverse array of stakeholders and viewpoints including teachers, school and district administrators, parents and families, community, tribal and civic leaders, and economic development leaders.

Communities members offered input on everything from teacher support to improving broadband infrastructure for online, career readiness courses. The majority of comments addressed various elements of the state's overall school accountability system, including teacher evaluations, student testing, and school report cards. Comments also addressed unique needs of English learners, the types of courses offered or required in school, support for low-performing schools, and a handful of other topics.

PED will use the input received from the community meetings to inform the development of its ESSA plan for improving education in New Mexico. Individual reports for each community, along with this statewide summary report, are published at nmfirst.org.

FORWARD

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 for parents, educators, district leaders, employers and other community members to offer input on education systems.

In fall 2016, the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) partnered with New Mexico First to facilitate a series of 19 meetings in six communities throughout the state, including a Tribal Government to Government session. The goal was to solicit input about how New Mexico's future ESSA plan could best support student learning, teachers and schools. New Mexico First also issued an online survey in English and Spanish for those unable to attend a community meeting. Prior to the meetings all participants received a background report on ESSA and the status of student learning in New Mexico; it can be accessed at nmfirst.org.

The PED engaged in additional outreach activities, including district visits and meetings, teacher feedback through summit and advisory groups, and technical working groups.

What Happened at the Meetings?

These meetings provided participants a chance to learn about ESSA and share with PED their priorities, expectations and concerns. In each community, three meetings took place throughout the day and evening, thus accommodating different schedules of community members. One of the three meetings was specifically designed for teachers. Each meeting offered some brief opening remarks to set context, but the bulk of the time was devoted to small group discussions about how to ensure educational success for New Mexico students.

What Happens Next?

PED will use the input received to inform the development of its ESSA 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 were convened by PED. The department 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

New Mexico First engages people in important issues facing their state or community. Established in 1986, the public policy organization offers unique forums that bring together people to develop 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.

Final Report Authors

This New Mexico First report was prepared by Elizabeth Perrachione and edited by Pamela Blackwell and Heather Balas.

INTRODUCTION

A diverse array of stakeholders took part in the 20 regional meetings held in Gallup, Farmington, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Roswell, Las Cruces and the tribal Government to Government meetings held in fall 2016. Participants included teachers, school and district administrators, parents and families, community, tribal and civic leaders, and business and economic development advocates. The rich cultural diversity of the state was reflected in both the mix of participants as well as the range of ideas shared. Over 600 people attended the in-person meetings. In addition, over 400 people provided their feedback through an online survey that was available in both English and Spanish.

This report overviews the collective feedback received at the meetings highlighting the areas of commonality among the regions. Responses from the online survey align with the feedback garnered through the in-person meetings. (For additional information specific to the regional and government to government meetings, please refer to the individual community reports located at nmfirst.org.)

Participants in all meetings offered input on what was working well, areas in need of improvement, and suggestions for ESSA implementation. They were asked, where possible, to focus on the essential variables associated with ESSA reform:

- School accountability and report cards
- Student assessment and coursework requirements
- Identification and support for English language learners (ELLs)
- Support for low-performing schools
- Support and evaluation of teachers and school leaders



WORD CLOUD

At the beginning of the community meetings, participants were asked to answer the question, “In one word, what does education mean to you?” Those responses were submitted into a “word cloud” application that makes the most frequent submissions larger. Above is the word cloud from the six regional meetings.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Communities members offered input on everything from teacher support to improving broadband infrastructure for online, career readiness courses. The majority of comments addressed various elements of the state’s overall school accountability system, including teacher evaluations, student testing, and school report cards. Comments also addressed unique needs of English learners, the types of courses offered or required in school, support for low-performing schools, and a handful of other topics.

Teacher Support and Evaluation

Under ESSA, rather than being required to develop teacher evaluation systems as under NCLB waivers, states are now “permitted” to implement evaluation systems. States with evaluation systems are required to make the public aware of the criteria they use.

New Mexico’s teacher evaluation system 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. The evaluation is also intended to identify where a teacher may need assistance. The PED proposes to continue the teacher evaluation system under ESSA.

Under ESSA, 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.

TEACHER EVALUATION - COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Community meeting participants shared both positive comments and considerable concerns regarding teacher evaluations. Those who appreciated the evaluation system lauded their administration for the transparency of the process, timely dissemination of data and clarity about how to utilize evaluation scores to improve performance in the classroom. Concerns expressed about evaluations were focused more on the evaluation process itself.

Some noted that considerable confusion still exists around evaluations, with others questioning the efficacy of the evaluations as a tool for supporting student learning. Most groups objected to student test scores counting for 50 percent of the evaluation rubric. A wide array of factors impact students’ ability and drive to succeed in school, many argued, much of which fall outside of the teacher’s control, especially for special education teachers some offered. Participants also commented that test scores that do not accurately reflect the level of engagement teachers have with students during instruction time.

Teachers reported that receiving teacher evaluation ratings of “ineffective” without effective recourse, transparency in the evaluation rubric and guidance on how to improve has left many dedicated teachers feeling demoralized.

Further, administrator accountability to ensure impartial and constructive evaluations was questioned by some groups. Others noted that concerns with evaluations are exacerbated by teachers feeling that they have no

voice in developing education policy. To many participants it seems that policy is set “by the numbers” and thus does not consider other factors that contribute to an educator’s success in the classroom.

Suggestions to improve teacher evaluations include:

- Lower the percentage that student test scores count toward teacher evaluations.
- Restructure the administrator observation process so that better promotes transparency, consistency and constructive guidance for classroom instruction.
- Ensure evaluation data transparency and accuracy, and when it is not, correct the data in a timely manner.
- Provide teachers with their evaluations at the beginning of summer break so they have time to review the feedback and improve.
- Adjust the evaluation rubric to better account for students’ cultural and language circumstances (e.g. Native American, English learners, special education, and at-risk students) so that these students’ teachers are more fairly evaluated.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Peer-to-peer collaboration among teachers was overwhelmingly viewed by participants as the most effective and rewarding type of professional development. They noted that the most effective peer-to-peer collaboration requires the support of administrators, a dedicated period of time built into the school-day for teachers to meet consistently during the week and throughout the school year. Teachers reported that peer-to-peer collaboration has resulted in effectively troubleshooting how to best customize instruction for classrooms and individual students, and how to coordinate lessons across disciplines, all of which have improved student learning. Teachers who have effective peer-to-peer collaboration feel that it has allowed them to become student-focused educators who honor their pupil’s voices. All communities noted that peer-to-peer mentorship can also be an effective way to both “reward” experienced educators while strengthening those new to the profession.

Others appreciated the opportunities they received, including those focused on STEM, leadership development and career pathways.

While all participants value educator professional development, many cited budgetary shortfalls as negatively impacting the amount of investment schools can make in professional development.

Autonomy to choose their own resources for classroom instruction was appreciated by many teachers. Some expressed concern that materials were not well distributed throughout districts, leaving teachers unaware of resources available to them. Still others cited a lack of time and training to determine which resources would be most useful to them in the classroom.

Many groups suggested that professional development begins in college when students are training to be teachers. They suggested that more needs to be done to more appropriately and rigorously train and prepare student teachers.

Suggestions to improve professional development include:

- Provided dedicated time in the school-day during the week and throughout the school year for teacher peer-to-peer collaboration

- Provide training on how to best use available resources in the classroom
- Include “regular”, special education and gifted teachers in peer-to-peer collaboration
- Increase student teacher training to one-school-year
- Increase funding for professional development
- Provide teachers training in the following areas:
 - Use of data from student assessments to inform instruction
 - Identify and work with students who have experienced or are experiencing trauma and other home-life challenges
 - Increase information technology literacy
 - Increase cultural competency (including hiring more Native American teachers)
 - Classroom management
 - Additional training for teachers who are not “in-field” teachers (i.e., They are teaching subjects outside of their subject-area training or expertise.)

TEACHER MORALE

Every community commended teachers for their strong commitment, resilience and hard work, as well as their ability to forge strong bonds with their students. For many, this appreciation also extended to administrators – who participants described as invested and impassioned – as well as school staff, including bus drivers and cafeteria workers. However, all groups expressed concerns regarding low teacher morale citing the following contributing factors:

- Heavy workloads that render preparation challenging
- Large class sizes that do not allow for individual instruction
- Fewer and dwindling stable resources
- Salaries that are not competitive
- Challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers

Suggestions for improving teacher morale include:

- Engage teachers in high-level decision making processes (e.g. development of standard-based guides and textbook selection)
- Allow teachers greater autonomy in selecting resources and create their own individualized instruction on the common core standards, including discretion for designating time parameters for instruction
- Increase the use of block scheduling for larger periods of time for classroom instruction and planning (i.e. 90-minute class periods)
- Expand use of “Work Keys” assessments which are helpful in effectively determining a student’s readiness for courses and career training and for use in other areas
- Hire additional mental health counselors for schools and provided focused support and training for teachers to identify and manage student behavioral issues
- Provide additional funding and resources to schools in rural areas so they can offer a comparable education to schools in urban areas (e.g. funds could be used for teacher recruitment and supports)
- Expand the use of district learning plans to guide teachers

- Increase efforts to cultivate more teachers as educational leaders
- Provide teachers and administrators with access to third-parties who can assist them in supporting struggling students
- Require fewer large-scale changes in the education system, as well as a longer adjustment period when changes do occur
- Establish a mechanism for removing unnecessary, ineffective, inefficient or duplicative required responsibilities and tasks for teachers and administrators

Student Assessments

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. 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.

Additional focus areas for ESSA include required outreach and input from stakeholders including thoughtful inclusion and support of rural school districts.

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.

In addition, 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 demonstration of competency” (ADC).¹ ESSA allows states the flexibility to develop ADCs for students who do not pass their high school assessment exam.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT-COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Some educators and business leaders noted PARCC student assessments as a positive, as they enable them to see New Mexico student performance in relation to their peers across the country. Participants also noted that teachers who receive support from well-trained administrators on how to assess the data also find the PARCC test results to be useful for informing classroom instruction.

Many rural communities have found the PARCC assessments challenging to administer due to lack of reliable broadband access. A limited number of computers also impacts overall student instruction. Further, some groups questioned the accuracy of PARCC assessments in measuring student performance, especially for ELL students. Finally, many communities shared that areas of study not tested that provide for a well-rounded

¹ (Albuquerque Public Schools, n.d.)

education (e.g. science, social studies, and socioemotional skills) are less emphasized due to the time it takes to prepare students for the assessments.

In all communities, it was the amount of time devoted to testing and re-testing, as opposed to the individual assessments themselves, that created the most concerns. Many shared that teachers have less instructional time and that they sense a lack of balance in classroom planning and structure. Participants explained that many teachers are unclear on what to prioritize, resulting in components of teachers' responsibilities becoming neglected. Some commented that assessment demands have also tempered inspired and innovative teaching.

Participants commented that leadership turnover and instability combined with insufficient training for administrators in assessment systems, inhibits the progress of school staff and engenders a lack of confidence in student assessment data. In addition, a lack of participation among administrators regarding the implementation of policy and accountability measures in this area, noted some, negatively impacts school morale.

Suggestions to improve student assessments include:

- Reduce the overall amount of student testing and number of assessments
- Allow SAT/ACT testing to replace current end of year assessments
- Ensure that all schools have the technological infrastructure in place to support the online assessments and preparation for those assessments
- Add fields that better identify students with special needs or other circumstances that may impede their ability to perform well on the tests (e.g. ELL and special education students)
- Align in a more accurate way what is being tested with what is being taught
- Uphold that all subjects as being equally important for student success and a well-rounded education, regardless of whether students are tested on those subjects

School Report Cards

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.

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.

- 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.)

SCHOOL REPORT CARD – COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Community meeting participants, especially parents, grandparents and those engaged in community-wide economic development efforts, found the school grades useful. However, many others noted that continued confusion exists regarding the usefulness of the school report card system and the evaluation scores upon which they are based. Administrators, teachers, and community members feel that the school report card system unfairly negatively labels their schools, teachers, students and their community. Further, they argue that without providing guidance and recourse to improve the schools, a failing school grade undermines the value of the community and more importantly undercuts students' confidence and belief in themselves.

Suggestions to improve institutional report cards:

- Train administrators and school leaders on the school grades system and its components
- Provide consistent, local on-site guidance to school administrators on how to improve school grades
- Provide parents with information on the school grade system and how they can assist in improving school grades

English Learners

The new law contains several changes affecting students whose first language is not English, including changing the preferred terminology to “English learners”. State accountability systems and report cards are required to measure student progress and proficiency for English learners. 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 English learner students in their overall accountability data, enabling them to be phased in over time and as their English improves.

ENGLISH LEARNER – COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Community meeting participants were happy to see bilingualism being approached by some school districts as both an economic and cultural advantage. However, programs for English learners are reportedly not adequately funded leading to a lack of support for teachers and students. Additionally, some groups noted, English learners traditionally underperform in assessments – as they must often take tests in English rather than their own native languages.

Suggestions for English learner programs include:

- Support licensure of teachers whose native language is not English as well as those who teach English language learners (e.g. Increase the number of teachers with Teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) endorsement)
- Require all teachers to be bilingual within a certain number of years after they were hired to help in communicating with ELL students and also to raise awareness of the benefits of mastering more than one language.

- Encourage schools to become bilingual, teaching students who know English other languages while supporting those who are learning English.
- Partner with community organizations who can provide volunteers, mentors and tutors – all of which offer support to ELLs

Coursework

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. 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. The new law also provides additional funds to support science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs.

COURSEWORK – COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Many participants asserted that a more holistic approach should be employed when identifying students’ academic needs and tailoring curriculum and area tracts for students. Overwhelmingly, participants are concerned that the current education system is not meeting the academic needs of the whole child.

General issues regarding coursework include:

- Use of a “one-size fits all” model of instruction
- Lack of differentiated resources for different learning styles
- Insufficient time for students to master concepts
- Insufficient resources for gifted and special education students
- An overemphasis on math and reading for student assessments resulting in less instruction time for other subjects as well as social and emotional learning

CULTURALLY RELEVANT CURRICULUM

Tribal leaders commended the Navajo Nation for taking important steps regarding coursework by developing academic standards and working collaboratively with public schools and PED. They were also pleased with the Navajo, Zuni and Tewa language programs and classes that emphasize and teach indigenous culture – and would like to see these programs expanded in other schools and districts. However, many tribal participants were concerned with the lack of control over the education of their students due to a lack of interjurisdictional alignment and coordination as well as a lack of control over students located in large cities. Additionally, participants felt that many educators and school leaders are not adequately equipped to support the cultural needs of Native American students and indigenous viewpoints.

Suggestions for a more culturally relevant curriculum include:

- Respectful acknowledgment of the Native American tribes and the importance of competency-based training and cultural awareness

- Better coordination by public schools to incorporate the tribal calendar in scheduling
- Engagement of tribal leadership in continuing to advocate for their students attending schools in large cities
- Expand the teaching of Native culture as a way to increase students' self-esteem and pride in their heritage (Tribes have found this to be particularly effective in combating drug and alcohol addiction.)

FINE ARTS, STEM AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Many communities expressed support for fine arts and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) courses available to their students, with some suggesting that these opportunities are as valuable as other career tracts by offering alternatives for students who are less interested in core academic courses. Many suggested that it is these courses that not only engage students in school but also keep them in school.

While physical education classes were not specifically discussed, some communities wanted to see an increase in recess time that can aid in student wellness and help them to better focus during classroom time.

CAREER READINESS AND VOCATIONAL COURSEWORK AND TRACTS

Overwhelmingly, all communities saw value in increasing access to career readiness and vocational coursework. Business and economic development participants in all communities reported that they have shown a commitment career readiness and vocational education and would like to do more.

Suggestions to improve career readiness and coursework opportunities include:

- Engage more teen centers in providing trade and vocational support
- Increase funding and support for dual credit programs via online learning academies, and between multiple entities including school systems
- Increase the number of guidance counselors and provide enhanced training so that they may better guide all students to reach their unique academic and career goals
- Better prepare students for the track they choose (i.e. college, technical and vocational or career).
- Boost academic achievement in the earlier grade levels to ensure student success in high school and beyond
- Recruit and retain more trade and vocational teachers, including engaging community professionals as classroom instructors

Low Performing Schools

Regarding low-performing schools, ESSA provides for greater flexibility on school "turn-around strategies." These decisions and the responsibility for interventions will first be driven by the schools and districts. 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.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

All communities cited expansion of early childhood education as working well. More schools are prepared to support younger children shared some participants. Participants with early childhood education in their schools reported that those children are better prepared for elementary school. Participants suggested that access to preschool should be expanded in all communities.

WRAP-AROUND FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

All participants agreed that there are myriad of reasons why students may struggle in school, namely economic and other home-life challenges that inherently supersede students' motivation and ability to succeed in school. Participants shared that while systemic support for children dealing with inequity in the form of poverty and access issues, social justice barriers, and disabilities, has improved in some areas, considerable barriers still exist. "Whole-level engagement" as a strategy to create improvement throughout the entire community has increased, noted others, with many effective student and family programs available especially in urban areas.

Overwhelmingly, however, participants cited the need for access to a greater array of support services to assist students and their families. While requested by all communities, participants from rural communities observed that the need for wrap-around services is more acute since rural communities typically have very few non-profits and lack a cohesive network of social services. Participants suggested that filling these gaps in services would better ensure student success.

Suggestions for improving wrap-around student and family support services include providing:

- Nutritional food (at home and in school)
- Assistance, at times, with expenses
- Home visits
- Parental support and training
- Community wellness and health programs
- Teen centers
- Support services at schools so that schools are gathering places and community centers (i.e. using a community school model)
- Transportation (in rural locations)
- Support for at-risk, students in foster-care, gifted and special education students
- Students in foster care and system-involved youth with required assurances and strategies to support their educational needs including:
 - That students can remain in their school of origin and are provided transportation to and from the school, or be immediately enrolled in a new school though they may not have all records normally required for enrollment
 - That PED designate an employee to serve as a state point of contact for child welfare agencies to oversee the successful transition and support of these students

TRUANCY

The need to better address the many reasons why students either do not attend and/or do not perform well in school when they do was noted in all meetings. As with wrap-around services, poverty was cited by every group as an issue that impacts student attendance and engagement. Participants shared that many students need to get a job to help support their families rather than attend school, while others are so effected by challenges in their home lives that focusing on school is difficult and feels irrelevant. Additional impacts on student attendance cited by groups include:

- Students home-life difficulties

- Lack of communication between parents, the school and law enforcement
- Inconsistent or ineffective truancy rules
- An inability to break the truancy cycle (Participants noted that parents of truant students were many times truant students themselves.)
- Lack of effective consequences at school and at home
- Unreasonable school start times
- Police presence in schools

Overwhelmingly participants suggested in-school suspension programs and other resources that would address behavioral issues without removing students from school. Participants also suggested establishing more wrap-around truancy prevention teams led by truancy “coaches” to address the underlying reasons for truancy.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND COLLABORATION

School-community partnerships, cited many groups, provide volunteers, mentors and tutors to assist administrators and teachers in the classroom. Additionally, noted some participants, businesses and economic development professionals can offer feedback to schools on the skills, knowledge and training industries and businesses need for future employees. This real-world input enables administrators and teachers to focus career-readiness classes so that students graduate with relevant skills that are crucial for their ongoing success. In many areas, especially within rural communities, libraries are becoming a hub for school and community.

One group shared that success happens in environments where partnerships provide a nurturing environment for students. Specific suggestions on where such partnerships and community collaboration could be deepened and better established include between:

- Tribal communities
- Tribal communities and public schools
- Business sectors, communities, schools, nonprofits, and teachers with the specific purpose of helping the whole community have a voice and way to contribute to education in the community
- Schools (for the sharing of best practices)

One group also suggested bringing leaders from all sectors together on a regular basis for multiple meetings to focus on a shared set of goals to help the long-term development of children. This would, they explained, create a backbone structure for education while providing resources that reflect the goals of their communities.

Additional Feedback

Additional focus areas for ESSA include required outreach by state education departments and input from stakeholders including:

- Parental participation
- Authentic engagement with tribal governments and communities

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Many parents noted their appreciation for open lines of communication and alignment of information and efforts between the teachers, school board and principal. Parents in all groups also expressed appreciation for school districts providing parents with direct email access to teachers, and for schools sending automated

messages by phone and text. One group commended its district for listening to parents' concerns demonstrating that parental feedback was seriously considered and positively impacted school operations. Many participants also appreciated transparency of school budgets.

Many groups expressed appreciation for parents who are highly engaged in the school, with participants (particularly in urban areas) citing multiple avenues for parents to be involved by providing hands-on, experiential learning opportunities and non-academic skills and subjects. A few groups noted that parental engagement is improving, with most identifying a need for increased engagement. Participants cited that the two primary reasons parents are not engaged in the schools are because they themselves did not have positive experiences when they were in school, and many parents feel they are not respected, that their voice is not valued by administrators and teachers.

Participants suggested that education leaders develop effective strategies to engage all parents including:

- Establish clear and consistent ways to communicate with parents
- Educate parents about all aspects of their children's education, including common core, goals, and required paperwork – this will promote parents to partner with teachers
- Conduct a study on how to better engage parents
- Better engage parents who are monolingual (i.e. speak a language other than English), have less formal education, and who did not have positive educational experiences as students
- Provide transportation for parents to attend meetings, events, and programs
- Provide programs, parenting and other courses, and support services at the school (i.e. the community school model)
- Seriously consider parent input and concerns, and respond to parents in a timely manner
- Foster a welcoming environment in the schools for parents and families

INTER-JURISDICTIONAL COLLABORATION

All participants agreed that more needs to be done to better align and coordinate the various government and other entities that govern education in our state. Participants suggested that interjurisdictional collaboration and meaningful communication among the governing bodies would help develop more effective education policies. Tribal leaders called for a more comprehensive tribal consultation process when developing education policy that impacts tribal communities.

CONCLUSION

Implementation of ESSA provides an opportunity for education stakeholders throughout New Mexico to continue to work together to provide all New Mexico children with a quality education that will shape their future and our state's economic future, allowing students to reach their full potential.

The Public Education Department and New Mexico First appreciate the time, effort and commitment to education of those who participated in the Gallup, Farmington, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Roswell and Las Cruces and tribal government to government community meetings. The PED will use the input received from the community meetings to inform the development of its ESSA plan for improving education in New Mexico.

Comments from each regional meeting were compiled in individual community reports detailing the most common themes and all suggestions from each community. This final report highlights those ideas that received the most support throughout the full community meeting engagement process. All reports are available at www.nmfirst.org.