



Achievement Gap Solutions Summits

A Project of the
Graduate New Mexico Initiative

BACKGROUND REPORT

Conveners

NM Office of the Governor
NM Public Education Department
NM Higher Education Department
Department of Indian Affairs
Office of African American Affairs

Organizer

New Mexico First



NEW MEXICO FIRST

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Preface

Purpose of this Report

This background report is designed to help participants prepare for a series of three summits on New Mexico student achievement gaps. The summits will address culturally specific strategies for honoring and strengthening youth. The events will address:

- African Americans, October 26, 2009
- American Indians, November 9, 2009
- Hispanics, December 1, 2009

Note: There are few right or wrong answers to any public policy question, and the problems and opportunities around our state's education system are complex. As a result, no brief explanation of the situation – including this report – can hope to cover all the information and opinions available. The contributors have provided their knowledge and expertise, but ultimately the people and policymakers of New Mexico must decide what course our education future will take.

The Conveners

Office of the Governor: When Bill Richardson took office in 2003, he pledged to be “The Education Governor.” In 2004, New Mexico began the *Making Schools Work* reform agenda targeting seven areas: academic rigor and accountability, closing achievement gaps, school readiness, parent involvement, quality teachers, 21st century classrooms, and college and career readiness. In August 2009, Richardson announced the next round of education reform, *Graduate New Mexico! It's Everybody's Business*, which prompted this report.

Public Education Department: PED's mission is to provide leadership, technical assistance and quality assurance to improve student performance and close the achievement gap. The department envisions a world-class educational system in which all New Mexico students are prepared to succeed in a diverse and increasingly complex world.

Higher Education Department: HED develops and coordinates relevant policies, programs and services that provide advocacy and support equitable access to college to enable all New Mexicans to succeed in reaching their full potential through education.

Department of Indian Affairs: As a cabinet-level department, the Indian Affairs Department (IAD) is the lead coordinating agency in New Mexico state government for ensuring effective interagency and state-tribal government-to-government relations. IAD reinforces tribal governmental efforts to ensure that Native American concerns and needs are addressed in state policymaking decisions.

Office of African American Affairs: The objectives of the New Mexico Office of African American Affairs are to enhance the quality

of life for African Americans in New Mexico and to increase responsible participation of African Americans in all facets of New Mexico's continuing growth and development.

The Organizer

New Mexico First is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that engages citizens in public policy in order to improve the state. Our events bring people together to develop solutions for New Mexico's toughest challenges. New Mexico First uses a unique consensus-building process that enables participants to learn about a topic in depth and develop concrete policy recommendations addressing that topic. Regardless of the topic, New Mexico First focuses on how to strengthen the state and improve the lives of its people.

Co-founded in 1986 by U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and retired Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM), the organization's honorary co-chairs are now Senator Bingaman and Senator Tom Udall.

The Summit Process

New Mexico First events are not typical conferences with day after day of presentations. There will be a series of guest speakers to help set the context, but the bulk of the event will be comprised of small group discussions among citizens who care about the topic. These particular one-day summits will ask participants to share their best ideas for closing New Mexico's achievement gaps.

Report Developers

New Mexico First staff-member Heather Balas compiled this report, using data provided by the Public Education Department and other sources. ***The content has been strengthened by the valuable expertise and insights of the following reviewers.***

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Introduction

Youth: Our Greatest Asset

Young people are our greatest resource. They will be tomorrow's teachers, doctors, farmers, engineers, builders and more. Each youth possesses great potential, and many adults understand that helping young people meet their potential is the greatest contribution they can offer our society. Today's youth have the capacity to be the most creative, technically skilled, computer-savvy generation yet.

In New Mexico, we are also fortunate to have many youth who speak two languages. Whether their first language is Spanish, Diné, or another language, these youth bring a unique and valuable resource.

For all these reasons and more, New Mexicans must unite behind the common cause of supporting our young people, ensuring they succeed in school and graduate on time. **This report focuses on the specific challenges and needs of New Mexico's minority youth, focusing primarily on Hispanics, Native Americans, and African Americans.** The report zeroes in on achievement gaps, because gaps between groups of students tell us a lot about which students are given the preparation they need, and which ones may be left out.¹

Percent of Student Ethnicity Enrollment

	African American	Asian	White	Latino/Hispanic	Native American
Nationally (2007) ²	32%	27%	25%	32%	Data unavailable
New Mexico (2007-2008) ³	3%	1%	29.5%	55.5%	11%

Figure 1: NM Public Education Department. Note: Data rounded.

Graduating from High School

There are a wide range of challenges facing young people today. Education is more important to their futures than ever before. For that reason, the high dropout rate in our state and nation is a grave concern. Much has appeared in the New Mexico press in recent months about graduation rates, with the most recent data showing more promising rates than initially projected. However, as the following table indicates, significant numbers of all students are not completing high school – with higher numbers among racial minorities.

National and State Graduation Rates

	Overall	African American	Asian	White	Latino/Hispanic	Native American
Nationally (2006, estimated) ⁴	69%	51%	79%	76%	55%	50%
New Mexico (2008 rates, certified 10/09)	60%	61%	80%	71%	56%	50%

Figure 2: U.S. Census and NM Public Education Department. Note: Data rounded.

¹ (Education Trust)

² (U.S. Census Bureau)

³ (New Mexico Public Education Department 19)

⁴ (Alliance for Excellent Education)

Academic Achievement

While graduation rates make headlines, most educators are equally concerned about student achievement. In New Mexico, we use a standards-based approach to assessing achievement, and we are recognized nationally for it.⁵ We know what skills students need to master each year (called “achieving proficiency”), and we have clear tools for determining if they do. The New Mexico Standards-Based Assessment (NMSBA) is administered to students annually. Some parents or teachers argue that there is too much emphasis on testing. Whether or not the standardized tests are popular, they point to clear challenges for our education system. That data tells us that too many New Mexico youth – especially Hispanics, Native Americans, and African Americans – are not mastering the essential skills they will need to be successful in the workplaces of the 21st century. See the following tables for details.

Percentage of NM Students Proficient in Math

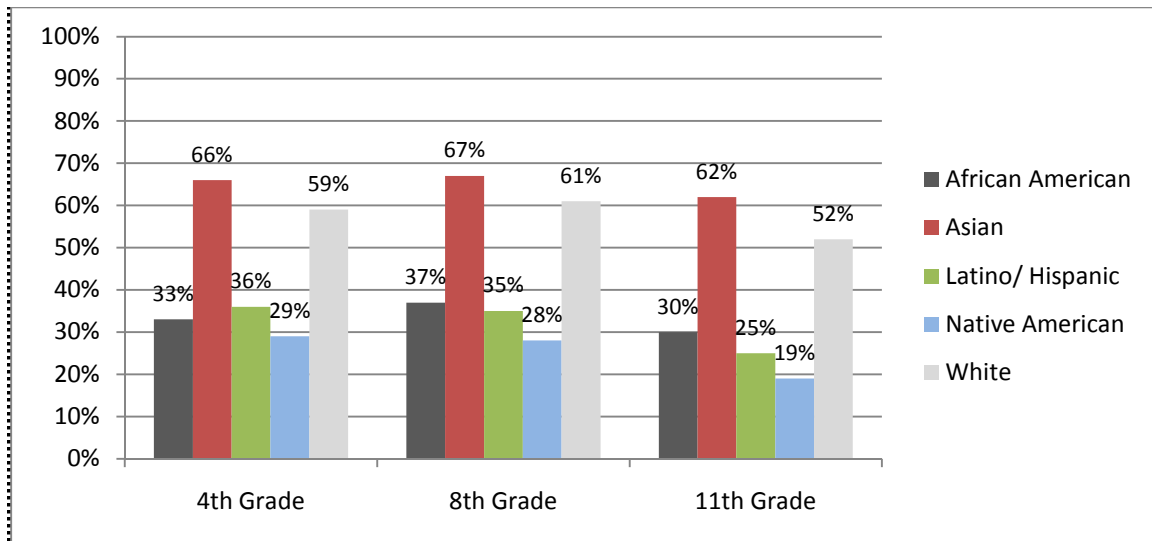


Figure 3: NM Public Education Department, 2009

Percentage of NM Students Proficient in Reading

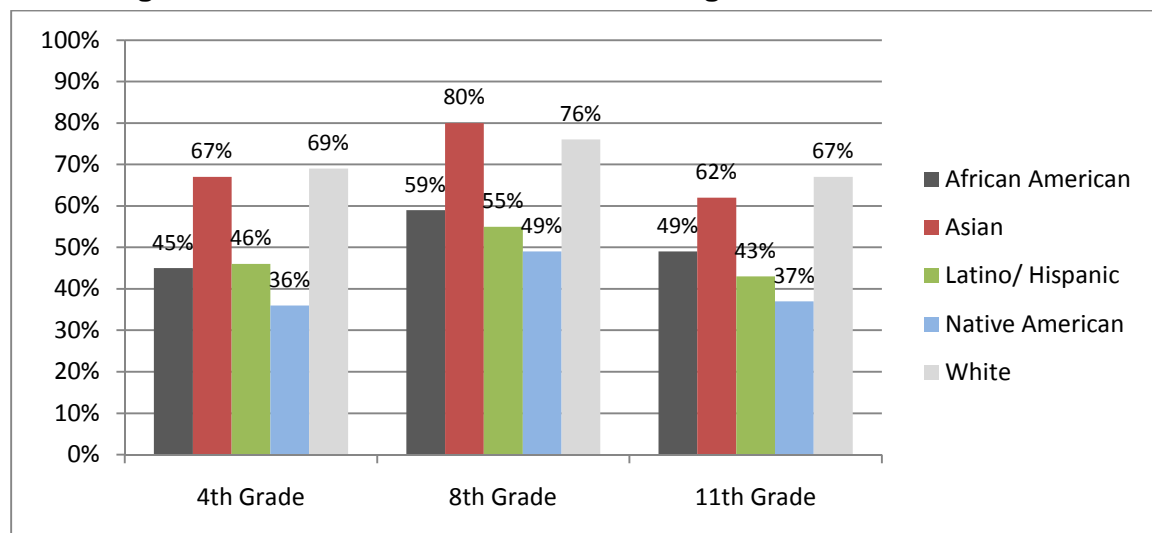


Figure 4: NM Public Education Department, 2009

⁵ (Quality Counts)

Challenges School Districts Face

Throughout the state, some school districts are consistently achieving academic proficiency and graduating students on time. Others are not. Understanding where students are, and are not, succeeding can help educators identify challenges and learn from each other. The following table presents the highest and lowest performing school districts in New Mexico.

Highest and Lowest Performing School Districts in Graduation

Graduation Rates: Top 5 Districts	Graduation Rates: Lowest 5 Districts
Vaughn Municipal Schools (100%)	Dulce Independent Schools (23%)
Quemado Independent Schools (99%)	Mesa Vista Consolidated Schools (29%)
Logan Municipal Schools (97%)	Taos Municipal Schools (39%)
Tatum Municipal Schools (97%)	House Municipal Schools (40%)
Jemez Mountain Public Schools (96%)	Raton Public Schools (41%)

Figure 5: NM Public Education Data, 2009

Highest Performing School Districts in Reading and Math

Reading Achievement: Top 10 Districts	Math Achievement: Top 10 Districts
Los Alamos (79.5%)	Los Alamos (72%)
Cloudcroft (78%)	Roy (69%)
Grady (73%)	Texico (64%)
Des Moines (72.5)	Animas (62%)
House (71%)	Clayton (62%)
Elida (71%)	Rio Rancho (58%)
Texico (71%)	Cloudcroft (56%)
Mosquero (70%)	Logan (53%)
Clayton (69%)	Springer (53%)
Rio Rancho (69%)	Grady (52%)
Fort Sumner (68%)	Tatum (50%)

Figure 6: NM Public Education Department, 2009

These data show us that the majority of our top achieving school districts are located in small, rural communities. We also see from these tables that graduation and academic achievement do not necessarily go hand-in-hand. It is clear that graduation rates only show part of the education picture.

Albuquerque Public Schools

More than one in four New Mexico students (29%) are enrolled in the Albuquerque Public Schools.⁶ It is one of 66 large urban school districts whose academic achievement is tracked annually by the education research organization, Council of the Great City Schools. This organization argues that the nation cannot effectively raise student achievement without paying serious attention to the unique needs and challenges of urban schools. It further notes that students in urban schools are more likely to be Hispanic, African American, or Asian and are more likely to be English language learners.⁷ Part of this observation applies to New Mexico, where there are greater concentrations of Hispanic students in our urban schools.

⁶ (Council of Great City Schools)

⁷ (Council of Great City Schools)

Different Cultures, Different Strengths

Sometimes policymakers or researchers lump all “minorities” into one category, employing a one-size-fits-all strategy. While it is true that many educational interventions can be effective with students of all races, it is also true that some situations call for culturally specific solutions. That is one reason the state is holding three separate achievement summits (Hispanic, Native American, and African American). The following section provides limited culturally specific information for each group, but it is not intended to be comprehensive. Additional cultural context will be presented during the summits and through the shared wisdom of the participants.

Hispanic Youth

Hispanic Achievement and Gap⁸

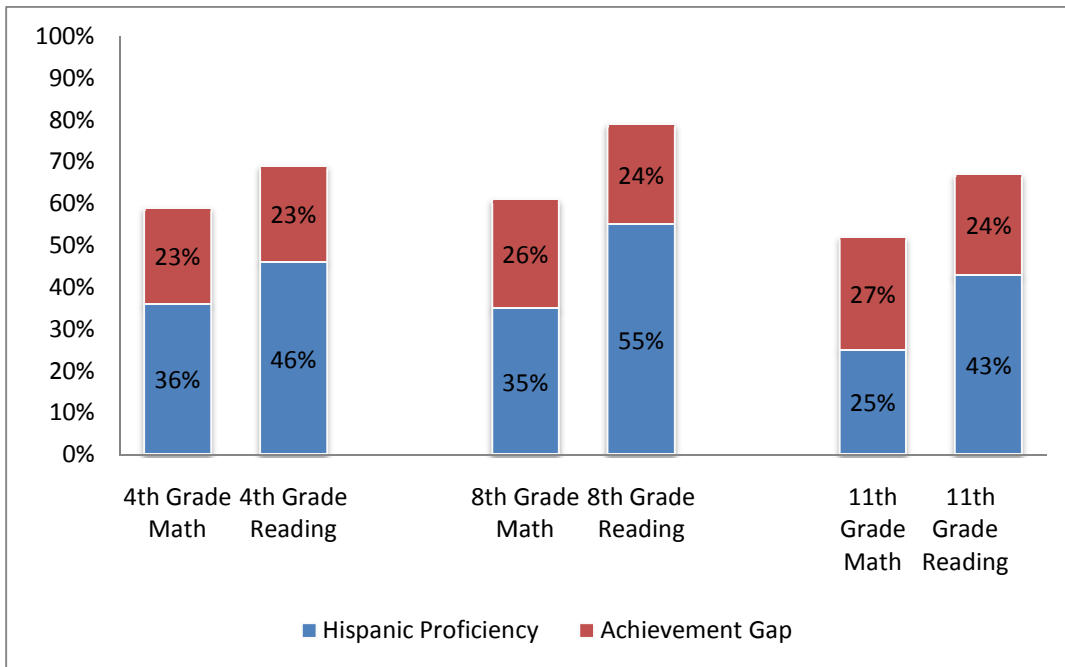


Figure 7: NM Public Education Department, 2009

NM Snapshot:

- Percentage of K-12 students who are Hispanic: 55.5%
- Percentage who graduate from high school: 56%
- Size of achievement gap: 23-27%
- Percentage in poverty: 23%⁹

Hispanics comprise more than half of New Mexico’s population – and thus are not really a “minority” in our state. New Mexico’s success literally depends on Hispanic youth, since they will make up a majority of the future workforce. As noted previously, many Hispanic youth (particularly immigrant youth) bring the valuable skill of a language other than English. If these youth can become truly bilingual and bi-literate, they have a tremendous asset that can serve them well in their future careers.

However, fewer than half of Hispanic youth excel in school. A recent Pew Research Center national survey of young Latinos may shed some light on why.¹⁰ Among Latino youth polled (including high school graduates as well as drop-outs), reasons for not continuing their education include: needing to support their family (74%); limited English skills (49%); not liking school (42%); not believing they needed more education (39%).

⁸ (New Mexico Public Education Department). Gap calculated based on the proficiency of White students in each grade level.

⁹ (Coalition on Human Needs)

¹⁰ (Pew Research Center)

The study also finds that there are significant differences, what it calls the “second gap,” between Latinos who are immigrants and those who are native born. Immigrant Latinos are half as likely as their native born peers to plan to go college (29% versus 60%), perhaps because they are three times more likely to be sending financial support to family members in their home country.¹¹

Latino adults (ages 26 and up) cite some of the following reasons for why Hispanic students do not “do as well” in school:

- Parents not playing an active role in helping children succeed (61%)
- Limited English skills (58%)
- Different cultural backgrounds of Hispanic students and their teachers (47%)
- Not working as hard in school as other youth (41%)

However, when Latino *youth* (ages 16-25) were asked about their own educational experiences, most were positive:

- Most strongly agree that they are receiving or received a good education in high school (66%)
- Almost as many believe their teachers are working or worked to help them succeed (62%)
- Two-thirds credit their parents for playing an active role in their education (65%)

These somewhat contradictory results are interesting in that they point out different perspectives among slightly different generations. They also demonstrate that there is no “silver bullet” for raising Hispanic academic achievement.

*The following is the first of three case studies in this report. Because most of the participants attending the upcoming summits are familiar with New Mexico schools, two of the case studies feature schools **outside** our state – so that insights can be gained from educators in other places.*

National Case Study:

Imperial High School

Imperial Valley, California

Imperial High School’s 900 students are 80% Latino and at least one-third low-income. The school is located very near the Mexican border, and its student population contains many recent immigrants who are still mastering English. Yet Imperial High boasts a 99% graduation rate, high standardized test scores, and a ranking in the top third of all California schools.

It was not always considered a high achieving school. In 2001, only 27% of its 11th graders met state English standards, and the school was ranked in the 36% percentile statewide. The community did not have high expectations for the students academically. In those days, when the football team was winning, the community was happy. Grades took a back seat.

To bring about a change, the school administration refocused the faculty, parents, and students toward a data-driven, student-centered model that raised Imperial High’s rankings and energized the community to be proud of its school for more than sports. Soon, test scores were going up, with those of Latinos rising faster than their White counterparts, thus significantly narrowing the achievement gap.

How did all this change occur, and so quickly? A heavy focus on **standards** was definitely a key element, but not the only one. The school also focused on attracting and retaining **good teachers**. Teachers have a Faculty Senate that is very involved in school decisions.

The school also placed a huge **emphasis on graduation**, beginning with pencils handed out to freshman embossed with the number of credits they must earn to graduate on time. All students develop a written “**goals plan**” for what they plan to do after graduation, so they understand the value of college. Those plans help the school and community set high expectations. For example, Imperial High dropped “general math” and now only offers college prep algebra, geometry, pre-calculus, and calculus. It is the only school in its region to **require three years of math** to graduate, instead of the two mandated by the state. Additional courses are available through a partnership with the local **community college**.

This emphasis has not meant an elimination of **vocational training**. Instead, all students take at least one semester of a vocation class. In addition, about 200 students are members of Future Farmers of America, through which they learn the science and business of agriculture. The school also makes **tutoring** available for any students who are slipping behind, with the school athletics practices starting *after* tutoring. Coaches require students to keep their grades up in order to play ball.

After all those investments of time, effort, and energy, teachers at Imperial High watch almost all their students graduate and go to college. About 20-25% of students enroll in a four-year university, while about 70% go first to a community college. Said one math teacher, “Students need an adult who is not a parent who says, ‘You are fantastic.’” Imperial is helping youth believe exactly that.

(Source: The Achievement Alliance. More details on this and other successful schools are available at www.achievementalliance.org.)

¹¹ (Pew Research Center)

American Indian Youth

American Indian Achievement and Gap¹²

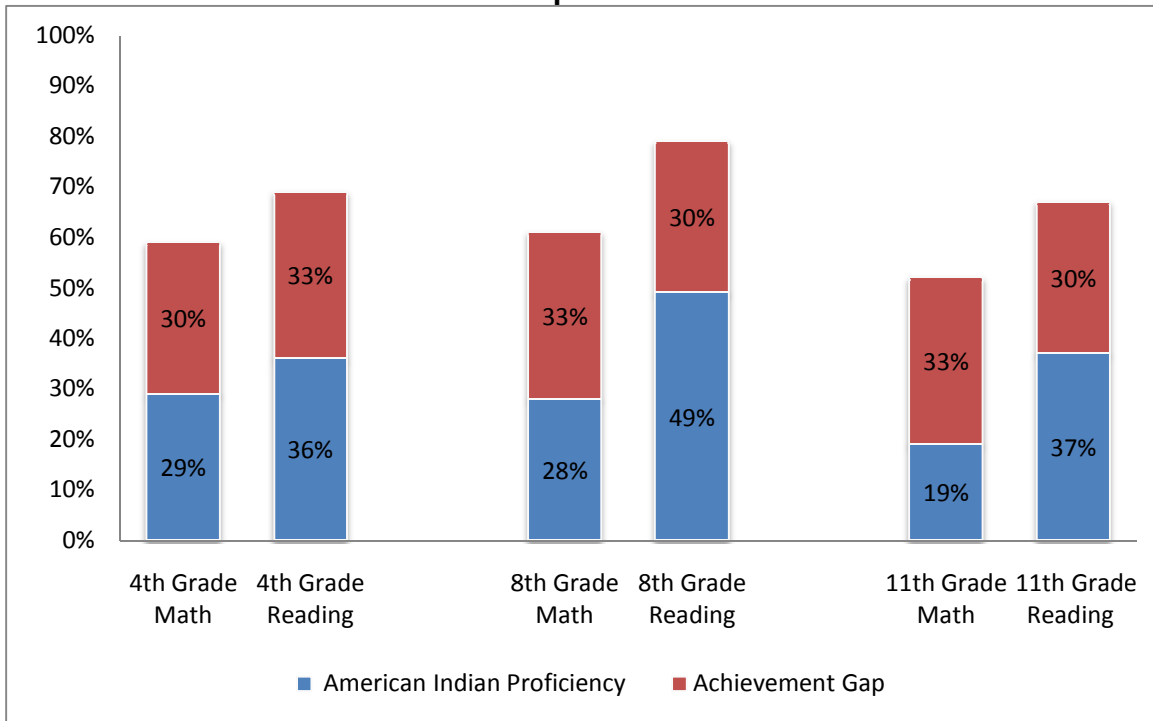


Figure 8: NM Public Education Department, 2009

NM Snapshot

- Percentage of K-12 students who are Native American: 11%
- Percentage who graduate from high school: 50%
- Size of achievement gap: 30-33%, with significant gains documented in the last three years

Additional Quick Facts¹³

- NM Indian population: 205,000
- Number of households: 60,000
- Employed: 52%
- Median household income: \$25,000
- Families in poverty: 28%

When researchers have tried to determine the causes of the Native American achievement gap, they identified various factors:¹⁴

- High student and staff mobility in schools
- Students disproportionately affected by violence and substance abuse
- Lack of understanding by teachers of cultural differences at the school
- Absence of curricular development to meet students' cultural and language needs

¹² (New Mexico Public Education Department) Gap calculated based on the proficiency of White students in each grade level.

¹³ (State of NM Indian Affairs Department)

¹⁴ (Southwest Comprehensive Center)

- Low socioeconomic status of the students
- Learning style differences among students
- Lack of student motivation
- Lack of parent motivation
- Low student self-concept

Poverty Levels of Major Tribes

Tribe	Estimated Percentage of Poverty
Navajo	44%
Jicarilla	29%
Mescalero	36%

Figure 9: NM Indian Affairs Department (Data rounded. Poverty statistics on pueblos unavailable.)

Tribal Case Study:

Dowa Yalanne Elementary School **Zuni Pueblo, Zuni, New Mexico**

Dowa Yalanne Elementary School, located in northwestern New Mexico on the Zuni Pueblo, is a K-5 school with about 300 students. Almost all of them (99%) are Zuni. Historically, their school and school district struggled, falling near the bottom of New Mexico rankings.

The school administration, in partnership with tribal leaders and the state's Public Education Department, decided to make a change. They put in place a series of reforms that resulted in Dowa Yalanne making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for three straight years: 2005, 2006, and 2007.

The school achieved that goal through five major activities:

- 1) **Hiring highly qualified Zuni teachers and assistants:** All teachers at Dowa Yalanne have a bilingual or TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) endorsement. They also all receive a separate license from the Zuni Tribe, assuring that the teachers understand the Zuni language and culture. In addition, most classrooms benefit from trained and committed classroom assistants.
- 2) **Integrated language and culture:** Cultural activities are woven into practically all the school's curriculum, including science, math, and reading.
- 3) **Parent and tribal involvement:** Because most of the teachers are from Zuni, they are already part of the community. They communicate well with the parents. Often, class assignments require students to consult their parents, grandparents, or community members about their culture. This system enables parents and tribal leaders to enjoy active roles in the classroom.
- 4) **Strong use of data:** The teachers and administration followed a structured data-driven instruction process, including effective use of short-cycle assessments and the state's standardized tests, to strengthen student achievement.
- 5) **Tutors:** The after-school tutoring program enables students to receive extra help, and teachers to understand the children's strengths and weaknesses.
- 6) **High expectations:** Teachers and parents at Dowa Yalanne communicate high expectations for their students. In turn, those student become high achievers.

Even a school as strong as Dowa Yalanne sometimes struggles, however. The school failed to make AYP in 2008, and in 2009 achieved it in math only. Despite this temporary setback, the school remains a model for the state and nation in making the classroom relevant to members of a culture.

Commented educator Edmund Lano, "Dowa Yalanne is a great place to go to school. The students learn 'the basics' of reading and math, and they also learn and maintain the values of their language and culture."

(Special thanks to Edmund Lano, Program Manager, Indian Education Division, NM Public Education Department, for being interviewed for this case study.)

African American Youth

African American Achievement and Gap¹⁵

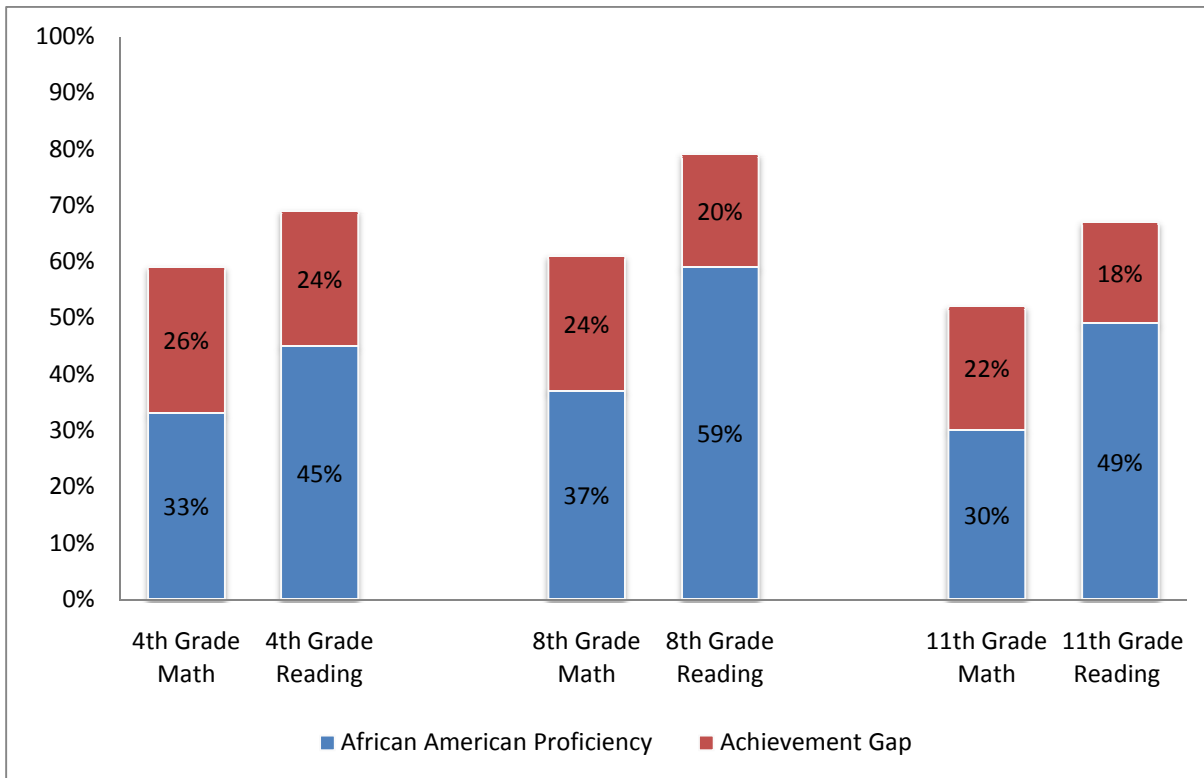


Figure 10: NM Public Education Department, 2009

NM Snapshot:

- Percentage of K-12 students who are African American: 3%
- Percentage who graduate from high school: 61%
- Size of achievement gap: 18-26%
- Percentage in poverty: 25%¹⁶

The African American achievement gap has been a well known national issue for several decades. Academic achievement among African Americans rose steadily throughout the 1970s and 1980s, closing the gap significantly. Then, according to the nonprofit policy organization Education Trust, progress stopped in the 1990s and the gaps began to widen again. Today, the national African American achievement gap is about 10 points wider than it was a decade ago.¹⁷

Why? The causes are complicated, and different researchers attribute the gap to societal causes, media messages, schools, families, individual youth aspirations, and the community. Inequitable wealth distribution is a key element of academic success, prompting the following common factors for some African American youth:¹⁸

¹⁵ (New Mexico Public Education Department) Gap calculated based on the proficiency of White students in each grade level.

¹⁶ (Coalition on Human Needs)

¹⁷ (Education Trust)

¹⁸ (NAESP Yareka!)

- Poor health care
- Frequent changes in residence, requiring transferring to new schools repeatedly
- Lack of books and other educational resources in the home
- Parents with lower levels of education
- Unstable family structures
- Lower expectations, either real or perceived
- Schools with inadequate funding
- Less qualified teachers in some urban schools

An article compiled by a national association for school principals noted that some researchers believe African American students may “maintain low levels of achievement purposely to avoid ‘acting white’ and to gain the approval of their peers.”¹⁹ Helping youth of all races see themselves as achievers is obviously a key strategy for improving academic success.

National Case Study:

Roxbury Prep Charter School Roxbury, Massachusetts

Roxbury Prep Charter School is a middle school, serving primarily low-income students near Boston. It serves students in grades 6-8, a majority of whom are African American or Latino and from single-parent families. About 12% have diagnosed learning disabilities and thus require some special education. Roxbury Prep’s goal is to take students who have not been well served by previous urban schools and prepare them for high school and college.

As incoming sixth graders, only about one fourth scored proficient on the state’s standardized test. They generally arrive at the school two or three grade levels behind in reading and math.

By eighth grade, more Roxbury Prep students are meeting or exceeding state proficiency standards than students at most Massachusetts middle schools, with 78% of its African American students proficient or above in math. (Only 56% of White students in the state achieve that goal.)

After students leave the middle school, nearly all (95%) graduate from high school, and more than 75% enroll in college. The charter school boasts that its alums are now attending such selective schools as Boston College, Bowdoin College, Howard University, and Tufts University.

Like most charter schools, Roxbury has a set of curriculum goals for students, which it maps to the state standards. Students go above state middle school requirements with additional courses (such as ancient history and geography). One class per week is devoted to character and the “School Creed,” with discussions on scholarship, integrity, dignity, responsibility, perseverance, community, leadership, and social justice.

Students wear a uniform, complete significant homework every night, and are expected to adhere to high standards of conduct.

Said one student: “I wasn’t sure I was going to make it. But when I got to Roxbury Prep, I started believing I could.”

(This summary was compiled from a profile published by the Achievement Alliance. Additional details on this and other successful schools are available at www.achievementalliance.org.)

¹⁹ (NAESP Yareka!)

Solutions

The previous pages described some of the challenges facing many New Mexican students. Concrete strategies are in place, however, both in New Mexico and around the nation to address the achievement gaps. This section addresses some of them.

National Strategies

The Basics

The Education Trust points to these four proven solutions for reducing achievement gaps:²⁰

- **Standards:** Clear and public standards for what students should learn, at benchmark grade levels, is essential.
- **Curriculum:** Challenging and interesting curriculum must be aligned with the standards.
- **Extra help:** Additional instruction, time, and support may be needed for some students.
- **Teachers:** Good teaching matters more than anything else.

Engage the Business Community

Increasingly, around the nation and in New Mexico, the business community is taking an active role in education. Rather than just donating money to school causes, more and more business groups want to lend a hand in the classroom, in curriculum, through leadership and mentoring, and in policy. To make these types of partnerships work, business people who want to be active must let their local schools know, and schools must create a welcoming atmosphere that engages their entire community.

Teacher and Principal Preparation

Giving teachers and principals the preparation they need to be effective in the classroom and the community is essential to school success. Increasing calls for teacher and school accountability go hand-in-hand with educator preparation. Some reformers recommend changes in our state and nation's colleges of education. Increased professional mentoring and professional development are also common strategies.

Consider Culture

Most educators agree young people are excited about school when it is made relevant to them. Some culturally based strategies for achieving that goal include:²¹

- Curriculum based on traditional culture
- Culturally sensitive, activity-based, outdoor curriculum (shown effective for Native Americans)
- Culturally based motivation through role models, teachers, and parents

²⁰ (Education Trust)

²¹ (Southwest Comprehensive Center)

Meaningfully Engage Parents²²

- Classroom volunteerism
- Helping at home
- Attending school events
- Parent classes and skills building
- Involving parents in school decisions
- Involving parents in leveraging community resources

Some parents want to be involved, but issues like confidence, language, or uncertainty get in the way. Schools that want to engage these parents must make sure the parents:²³

- Understand they *should* be involved
- Know they are *capable* of making a contribution
- Feel *invited* by the school and their children

School Choice

Many policymakers and parents see school choice as an effective and important strategy in the toolbox for improving academic achievement. States and communities support school choice through various approaches:

- **Charter schools:** Viewed by many people as hubs of innovation, these public elementary, middle, or high schools generally focus on a specific curricular focus, such as technology, dual-language, engineering, or the arts. Each has its own governing body.
- **Magnet schools:** These public schools also often offer specialized curriculum. They generally draw students from across a school district, without the typical geographical boundaries. They, like regular public schools, are governed by the local school board.
- **Education Tax Credits:** Tax credits for individuals, couples, or businesses to support scholarships for low-income students to attend private schools of their choice. Introduced in the NM legislature in 2008, the annual credit would have been \$500 for individuals or \$1,000 for couples.
- **School Vouchers:** Vouchers are certificates issued by some state or local governments that enable parents to pay private school tuition at the school of their choice, rather than their local public school. New Mexico does not offer vouchers.

²² (Parent Involvement Centre)

²³ (Chalkboard Project)

- **Home schools:** Increasing numbers of parents who choose to home school are supported by state and community networks, tailored curriculum, and other resources.

Consider School Size²⁴

Research indicates that, if effective teachers are in place, school size can directly affect student achievement. A study of 293 public high schools in New Jersey found that, after socioeconomic status, school size was the best predictor of both graduation rates and student performance on achievement tests. School size can also counterbalance some of the negative effects of an impoverished background, particularly among low-income students.

This research suggests that small schools level the playing field, enabling low-income students to succeed at the same levels as students from more privileged backgrounds. This finding brings obvious relevance to the achievement gap that has plagued New Mexico's schools. Several of the researchers involved in the school size studies essentially concluded that the poorer the students in a community, the smaller their schools should be in order meet their academic needs.

See appendices for additional ideas on strategies for improving student success.

Activities Underway in NM

A wide range of strategies are currently underway in New Mexico. They are listed here so that summit participants are aware of existing activities and thus less likely to recommend duplicative programs.

State Strategies

In recent years, Governor Richardson and the Legislature have supported:²⁵

- Three-tier teacher licensing, with increased teacher compensation for increased competencies
- More school health centers
- Student nutrition (school breakfast and lunch)
- School safety
- After-school programs
- Pre-kindergarten programs
- Bilingual education including native languages
- Tribal involvement in schools
- Adoption of a Navajo language textbook
- Pilot program devoting more K-3 classroom time in high poverty schools
- Support for new and existing charter schools

- Establishing dual-chartering authority so that new schools may be authorized by their local school district or the state
- Creating Educational Plans for Student Success (EPSS) at each school, with progress assessed quarterly

Graduate New Mexico

In August 2009, Governor Bill Richardson announced a new initiative: ***Graduate New Mexico! It's Everybody's Business***. The initiative's main goals are to bring back 10,000 dropouts, address the achievement gap, and improve graduation rates in New Mexico. The following six components are to be funded through federal stimulus dollars:

- 1) An expansion of IDEAL-NM (Innovative Digital Education And Learning) to make online courses available to up to 10,000 students who need to make up credits to graduate
- 2) The appointment of a task force for the "Schools Most In Need of Improvement" to examine the schools that have consistently failed to improve over the last five years and make recommendations about intensive interventions
- 3) The establishment of the Office of Hispanic Education at the Public Education Department to engage in meaningful ways to address the achievement gap
- 4) Three Governor summits on the achievement gap, each with a separate focus on Hispanic, Native American, and African American student achievement to be held in October, November, and December of 2009
- 5) Online cultural competence training for teachers
- 6) The creation of an annual report card clearly reporting achievement, graduation rates, drop out rates, college attendance, college remediation rates, and post secondary attainment levels for each ethnic group

Conclusion

If you spent the time to review this report, you are obviously committed to the cause of closing the achievement gaps that hinder the future success of New Mexico youth. The concepts and research presented here will inform your deliberations during the upcoming summits.

²⁴ (Think New Mexico)

²⁵ (New Mexico Public Education Department)

Appendix

Appendix A: Latino/Hispano Education Improvement Task Force

This task force, created in 2009, includes civic, business, government, parent, and education leaders from throughout the state. In June 2009, it submitted to New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson a set of recommendations. Several of the recommendations are underway, including the Solutions Summit for which this report is a backgrounder.

Components of the task force's report are reprinted below.

Fundamental Premise:

The Latino education crisis threatens the social and economic future of New Mexico.

- Latinos are the vast majority of students (55.5% vs 29.5% White)
- Schools are failing to educate 50.5% of Latinos (92,334 as of 07-08)
- Economic costs of failure to educate tens of thousands of Latinos is staggering. Aside from billions in lost tax revenue and lost income, expenses include:
 - Health Costs (uninsured, underinsured, etc.)
 - Incarceration/detention costs (Latinos are almost 80% of kids in detention)
 - Unemployment and underemployment
 - AFDC and food stamp costs
 - Quality of life costs (NM considered among worst states to raise a child)

What schools are doing for Latinos is not working. A new paradigm for education delivery is needed

What the Task Force Urges Governor Richardson To Do

Provide Leadership and Support to Make New Mexico the Flagship State Leader and National Model

1. Create a sense of urgency around the Latino education crisis. Declare a state of emergency. Call for bold and provocative ideas and solutions.

2. Press Conference: Declare state of emergency regarding Latino education and a call for action statewide for creation of new paradigm for education delivery.
3. Marshal all resources to address this crisis: human and financial.
 - a) Human: Create an office of Latino education
 - b) Rework job descriptions to marshal existing human resources
 - c) Financial: Redirect existing resources
 - d) Stimulus monies: Initiate bold and provocative ideas (Learn & Earn, etc)
4. Hold a Latino solutions summit in the fall in time to generate ideas for bills.
5. Launch mass media campaign.
6. Develop proposal for stimulus monies to invest in Latino education by funding the Task Force "Education Institute" that will do three things.
 - a) Offer "train the trainer" activities to provide statewide cultural proficiency skills for educators.
 - b) Create a parent training model for providing skills to negotiate the schools.
 - c) Develop training modules for teacher training and community engagement.

Appendix B: 2009 Tribal Leaders Summit on Education

Excerpt from the New Mexico State-Tribal Leaders Summit Report

Presented by Governor Norman Cooney, Pueblo of Zuni

Problem Statement: There were many compelling issues presented by the Committee related to Indian Education. Many Native American-serving schools struggle to meet Adequate Yearly Progress at all levels of elementary and secondary education and Native Americans matriculate and persist through higher education at lower rates than their peers in all other races. In addition, schools that serve Native American students lack appropriate curricula, technological resources, and a sufficient number of qualified Native American teachers to ensure such students are prepared for higher education. Finally, tribal leaders feel there are inadequate resources for public school districts that serve Native American students and federal impact aid dollars should be used more effectively to improve the quality of Indian education in those districts.

Solution #1: Support legislation to change the current state “equalization formula” to provide greater resources to public schools so they will better address the unique educational needs of Native American students.

Solution #2: Direct the Public Education Department (PED) to work with the Higher Education Department to use Indian Education funding to recruit, train, and mentor Native high school students into careers in Elementary and Secondary Education and provide scholarships that can be used at public and tribal colleges for this purpose.

Solution #3: By Executive Order, create a task force to review state curriculum standards and requirements, including those pursuant to the No Child Left Behind Act, and recommend legislative or policy measures that could be undertaken to ensure public school curricula serving Native American students prepares them for advanced learning skills and appropriately incorporates Native language, culture, and history content. This Task Force should include: Native teachers/administrators; Indian education representatives from the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) and PED, including the Indian Education Advisory Board; tribal leaders; the Indian Affairs Department and representatives from the Tribal Higher Education Commission.

State Commitments and Recommendations

Addressing the equalization formula

- Work toward developing a new equalization funding formula. Public Education Department (PED) to look at the feasibility of adjusting the equalization formula to provide more resources to rural school districts and those districts with significant numbers of Indian students.

Increase the recruitment and training of qualified Native American teachers.

- Train and recruit Native Teachers utilizing Indian education funding and provide scholarships for recruitment.

Improve preparation of Native American students for postsecondary education

- Create a task force to work with the Indian Education Advisory Council, the Indian Education Division of PED and the Indian Affairs Department (IAD) to look at developing culturally relevant curriculum while ensuring that New Mexico schools still meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind Act. This task force should also look for ways to recruit and retain Indian teachers.
- Look into ways of expanding school-based health centers in tribal schools.
- Work with the state legislature on expanding eligibility for the Lottery Scholarship to Native American students who attend tribal colleges.
- PED to convene a summit to address the achievement gap and education disparities among Native American and Hispanic students.
- Work toward funding the American Indian Higher Education Act.
- PED will continue to focus on Native language preservation.

Appendix C: Accelerating African American Student Achievement

The following are some of the recommendations developed by the New Mexico Office of African American Affairs for their 2007 policy brief on raising African American student success in public high schools.²⁶

Strategies for Students

- Each year, complete or update the state's Next Step Plan (NSP), along with parents, teachers, counselors or other school officials.
- Prepare for and take, in the appropriate grades, the New Mexico Assessments, PSAT, SAT, ACT, or other tests if appropriate.
- Participate in study groups, enrichment clubs, and career related organizations.
- Get financial aid information from the counselor's office.
- Submit the Federal Student Aid application in January of your senior year.
- Attend career and college fairs.

Strategies for Parents

- Believe that your teenager is intelligent and capable.
- Focus on her or his strengths while finding support for areas of need.
- Provide space at home for studying, and make sure your teenager studies.
- Make sure he or she meets deadlines on time.
- Know how she or he is performing in all subjects.
- Insist, as appropriate, that your teenager take rigorous, advanced level courses.
- Obtain information about the high school's annual yearly progress and if African American students are making yearly progress.
- Expect highly qualified teachers not only in subject matters, but also in effectively teaching African American students.
- Get tutoring if needed to raise student achievement.
- Attend career or college fairs with your teenager.

²⁶ (NM Office of African American Affairs and NM Public Education Department)

Appendix D: Health and Poverty Data

The Annie E. Casey Foundation publishes its annual *Kids Count Data Book*, which, among other things, ranks states on key indicators. These indicators are not directly tied to education; instead they provide a picture of the social dynamics that may influence a child's or youth's educational success.²⁷

Indicator	New Mexico Ranking (of 50 states)
Percent low-birthweight babies	36
Infant mortality rate	14
Child death rate	34
Teen death rate	37
Teen birth rate	49
Percent of teens who are high school dropouts	36
Percent of teens not attending school and not working	23
Percent of children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment	44
Percent of children living in poverty	47
Percent of children in single-parent homes	48

Figure 11: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2009

²⁷ (Annie E. Casey Foundation)

Appendix E: Results from English Language Learners Summit

These recommendations were among 60 developed during a June 2009 summit of approximately 200 educators, parents, and policymakers. The following have been identified as the top priorities from that list.

MAIN IDEA	RECOMMENDATION
Redesign licensure requirements and teacher preparation programs	So that all teachers are equipped and prepared to teach linguistically diverse learners, the NM State Legislature, NM Public Education Department, NM Higher Education Department, and NM Institutions of Higher Education should collaborate to redesign teacher licensure requirements and teacher preparation programs.
Develop ELL professional development model for principals	So that leadership success in our schools can be accomplished and we can "grow our own" leaders, the NM Public Education Department should develop an English Language Learner professional development model for principals to include assessment, evaluation, culture, change, mentoring, coaching, and collaboration to be implemented over three years.
Require bilingual or TESOL endorsement	So that the education of English Language Learners becomes the responsibility of all educators, the NM Public Education Department and the NM State Legislature should require that all instructors and administrators become bilingual and/or Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) endorsed and implement best practices.
Share data on successful programs	So that authentic and effective school/community/family partnerships are maximized, the NM Public Education Department, in collaboration with groups such as the Family/Parent Involvement Advisory Council and local school districts, should collect, report, analyze, and share data on successful programs which can be sustained, promoted, and replicated in communities across New Mexico, if appropriate.
Facilitate schools as centers of community learning	So that families, schools, and communities form partnerships to increase student achievement, school leaders in partnership with community organizations/services should facilitate and sustain (for the long-term) schools as centers of community learning and resources during and after-school hours.
Teams meet biweekly to review performance indicators and develop instructional plans	So that all students are achieving academically, teachers, principals, and coaches (i.e., teams) should meet biweekly to review all performance indicators to develop instructional plans implemented by the teacher and monitored by the instructional leader in order to enhance student progress.
Require variety of linguistically appropriate assessments	So that the public receives a comprehensive and authentic picture of a school's performance, the NM Legislature and NM Public Education Department should require a variety of valid, linguistically appropriate assessments and utilize a growth model for assessing and reporting a school's progress over time.
Require sheltered instruction training	So that language acquisition and academic achievement can be enhanced for all students, sheltered instruction training should be required by universities, local school districts, and professional development providers as part of teacher education programs and professional development for all teachers and instructional leaders.
Develop an ELL best practices Tier 1 companion guide to Rtl framework	So that English Language Learners receive high quality instruction in Tier 1, the NM Public Education Department, in collaboration with education partners, should develop a "Best Practices for English Language Learners in Tier 1 Companion Guide" to the Rtl framework that is widely disseminated to be used in professional development and which validates instructional programs and strategies for English Language Learners.
Ensure Administrator Institute focuses on ELL issues	So that site administrators have the background knowledge to effectively implement Tier 1 of the Rtl framework, inclusive of English Language Learners, the NM Public Education Department, in partnership with the NM Office of Educational Accountability, should ensure that the Administrator Institute (Senate Joint Memorial 3) includes a strand focusing explicitly on sheltered instruction and assessment, language acquisition and cultural competence, with English Language Learners as a strand focusing on the state's Rtl framework.

Appendix F: Federal Education Bills

Following are some Federal policy initiatives underway in Washington that address the achievement gap. The authors thank the office of **U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman** for their assistance in preparing this list. The Senator is a sponsor or co-sponsor of most of the following items.

Pending Legislation

Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

Also known as No Child Left Behind, the act will likely see significant in 2010. Potential reforms include:

- Decreasing high school dropout rates
- Supporting state-led efforts to set high academic standards for all students
- Enhancing education through technology
- Extending learning time
- Supporting local capacity-building

Graduation Promise Act (GPA)

This bill would authorize a new \$2.5 billion High School Improvement and Dropout Reduction Fund to support states in their efforts to turn around high schools with low graduation rates. Funding would be used by states to create the framework for identifying low-performing high schools and directing resources and assistance to them.

Success in the Middle Act of 2009

This pending bill would authorize funds to turn around low-performing middle schools and increase the number of children who successfully transition to high school.

Enhancing Teaching Standards and License Portability Act

This pending act aims to strengthening teacher quality and authorizes a competitive grant program for partnerships between state education agency administrators and one or more professional teacher preparation organizations to enhance elementary and secondary teaching standards.

Healthy Children

- **FIT Kids Act:** Promotes healthy, active lifestyles within federally supported education programs. It also includes professional development for teachers and principals to improve student fitness programs in the schools.
- **Child Nutrition:** Several bills seek to expand federal funding for and student access to free and reduced price school meals. Bills include the Hunger-Free Schools Act, Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act of 2009, and the Student Breakfast and Education Improvement Act of 2009.

Keeping PACE Act

Amends the No Child Left Behind Act to expand parent and community involvement in schools and provide the integrated supports and comprehensive services children need to learn and stay in school.

Expanded Learning Time

Pending legislation that would support efforts to expand the school year by coordinating school funding with the length of the school year, and encourages schools to increase the calendar from 180 to 200 days over four years.

ATTAIN Act

The pending Achievement Through Technology and Innovation Act (ATTAIN Act) would leverage technology for educational improvement, preparing all students for the 21st Century.

Existing Law

Next Generation Hispanic Serving Institutions Act

This act, a provision of the Higher Education Opportunity Act 2008, provides funding for Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) to offer fellowships and support services for graduate students, facilities improvement, faculty development, technology and distance education, and collaborative arrangements with other institutions.

GEAR UP

The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Program helps students prepare for and succeed in college.

Promoting STEM Education

- **The America COMPETES ACT** (Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science Act) became law in 2007. It focuses on increasing research investment, strengthening educational opportunities in STEM fields from elementary through graduate school, and developing an innovation infrastructure.
- **STEM Education Coordination Act of 2009** authorizes a committee to keep an up-to-date inventory of federal STEM education programs, encourage collaboration across programs, and develop and implement a strategic plan.

Tribally Controlled Colleges

This existing law makes Tribal Colleges an education priority within the U.S. Department of Education, in line with priority given to Historically Black Colleges and Universities and now granted to Hispanic Serving Institutions. In New Mexico, the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI), Crownpoint, and Diné College all benefit.

Accountability in Teaching

An existing provision in the Higher Education Opportunities Act aims to strengthen teacher quality and increase accountability. The law requires colleges of education to identify and tailor instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities and students who don't speak English as their primary language.

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