



## New Mexico Education Partners Legislative Goals for 2009

### Goal 1: Sufficient Funding

#### **The Legislature Must Act on the Proposed Funding Formula and Identify the Funding Source.**

It is imperative this year that the legislature implements the new funding formula along with a funding source to sustain sufficiency. The program enhancements provided by this action will bring obvious advantages for students. The New Mexico Education Partners recommend that we increase the Gross Receipts Tax by 1%.

- If adopted, **and segregated for public education only-as it must be**, the increase in GRT would allow the Legislature to fund other traditional educational needs such as transportation, utilities, insurance, etc. without those items having such a major impact on General Fund dollars for one or two years. This is especially important as we look at the State's projected revenue in the "out years".
- Since the exclusion of food and drugs, the GRT is no longer as regressive as it once was. The low income tax credit further reduces the impact a GRT increase will have on those less wealthy citizens.
- A quick comparison of surrounding states indicates that New Mexico businesses would **NOT** be put in a competitive disadvantage with its neighbors-Arizona's median sales tax rate is 8.3%. The major Texas communities-Amarillo, El Paso and Lubbock-bordering New Mexico have a sales tax rate of 8.25%. Even with the 1%, New Mexico's average will be below the regional average.
- A significant portion (estimated at 15% to 20%) of the New Mexico GRT is paid by non-New Mexicans.
- The GRT revenues should increase greater than the rate of inflation, thereby assuring public schools a base of secure funding in future years.

Poll after poll has indicated that New Mexicans would be willing to increase their taxes if they were assured it was going to education; therefore, a centerpiece of our proposal is that the Legislature abandons its long-standing practice of not "earmarking" tax revenues. We support the establishment of a fund of this 1% GRT increase identified and segregated for public schools. We believe that the absence of such a mandate for the 2003 Constitutional amendment has led to a supplanting of public school funds as opposed to a supplementing of such funds as it was intended.

**"79% of adults would favor increasing local taxes to provide additional funding for schools if they were confident that the money would go to schools and not to other items in the budget."**

*(Equity and Adequacy: Americans Speak on Public School Funding, a nationwide public opinion survey commissioned by ETS, 2004)*



An analysis of a 2005 poll in New Mexico conducted by Greenberg, Quinlan, and Rosner Research:

- The public believes the most effect way to improve children’s learning is by focusing on the classroom—quality and well-paid teachers, smaller classrooms, up-to-date materials and technology. As important is the deep belief that parents must be engaged and connected to their children’s schools and education if learning is to ever improve.

**Caveat:**

It should be understood that an increase in GRT, dedicated to the schools, *would not* negate the need for continuing General Fund support. The proposed funding formula is based on implementing new and additional programs in the schools to support student achievement and success, not increase salaries.

**Sufficient funding would also address two significant and urgent needs. These are:**

Support for Meeting the RTI Directives:

Phase-in urgently needed intervention specialists that will have the greatest positive impact on students and will address an unfunded federal mandate.

- As education practitioners and stakeholders, the Partners believe that funding for additional FTEs that support classroom instruction, such as Intervention Specialists, is the most urgent programmatic need. We recommend that the legislature provide funding for Specialists as a programmatic priority in the formula.
- Based on the federal IDEA legislation, general education teachers must provide tiered intervention for students who are not keeping pace with their peers in the classroom. In theory, this policy is excellent, but in practice it is impossible. Unfortunately, intervention has become another unfunded mandate. In practice, a teacher cannot sufficiently serve his/her entire class and provide both additional small group and individual intervention that the legislation dictates.
- Additional FTEs for Intervention, Reading and Math Specialists must be provided to schools to address student needs and Federal mandates. Like K-3 Plus, Intervention Specialists would enable New Mexico to address the Achievement Gap by addressing the Opportunity Gap. The same funding could also be used to lower class size or provide Educational Assistants in every class.

Note: Before New Mexico works to exceed current federal directives—as the PED is currently doing—we need to capture all flexibility allowable. We do not know what will and will not become educational mandates when the new administration works to reauthorize NCLB and IDEA.



## Background Information About RTI

IDEA 2004 requires careful attention to how special education evaluations are conducted. The statute places emphasis on linking student assessment to student instruction through the use of Response to Intervention (RTI).

The RTI model established by the PED requires a comprehensive evaluation which includes components that, when implemented appropriately, meet the basic Federal requirements established by the IDEA 2004.

The three-tiered Response to Intervention model is the process that Student Assistance Teams (SATs) in New Mexico must adhere to in order to successfully meet the needs of all students. This three-tiered model of student intervention is required in current state regulations at NMAC 6.31.2.10 (C)(1)-(3):

As a result of this new rule, general education teachers, who already carry a full teaching load, and have the responsibility to teach every child in their class up to the New Mexico State Standards, must now do the following for any child in their class who is behind and requires Tier 2 Intervention:

- Supplement with re-teaching or intervention.
- Schedule a supplement period.
- Reduce the size of the group down to three students or less.

If the child is still not exhibiting appropriate learning gains, then the teacher must:

- Replace current program with an intervention program.
- Schedule two intervention sessions daily (no less than 90 minutes total).
- Provide individual instruction.



### Time

In order to address student needs and help close achievement gaps, educational professionals need uninterrupted time to teach. In addition, the standard work day must include needed time that is dedicated to do the work associated with teaching such as:

- Planning, preparing, grading and reporting to parents
  - Mandated paperwork and assessments
- Professional time for learning and collaboration

What teachers know and do influences students' academic success. Research shows that adult learning transfers into student learning. The Partners recommend two additional days be added and funded to teachers' time for Professional Development.

### **The Community Agenda for America's Public Schools** (<http://thecommunityagenda.org>)

We must create effective schools that have robust relationships with families and other community institutions. We cannot make this happen without a willingness to work together. Missing from the education reform and accountability debate, however, is serious dialogue about how to harness the shared capacity of our schools and communities to achieve our common goals.

Therefore, we propose The Community Agenda for America's Public Schools. The Community Agenda is built on three core beliefs:

- Communities and schools are fundamentally and positively interconnected. Engaged communities build strong schools; effective schools are essential to strong communities.
- Schools can make a difference in the lives of all children. The quality of schools matters. High academic standards, rigorous curricula, high quality teachers, effective school leadership, aligned tests, accountability, and strong professional development are important factors for student success.
- Children do better when their families do better. We recognize this inextricable connection and actively support the strengthening and empowering of families.

At the heart of our Community Agenda is a commitment to work together to create strong and purposeful partnerships for change and results.

This idea – fully embraced – would make all Americans responsible and accountable for excellent schools and the positive development of all our young people.

Every institution that influences positive outcomes for children and youth must be part of the agenda - schools, families, government, youth development organizations, health, mental health and family support agencies, higher education and faith-based institutions, community organizing and community development groups, unions and business. Each brings assets and expertise, each must change how it does its work and all must work together to close the opportunity gap.



### **Addressing the achievement gap by addressing the opportunity gap**

K-3 Plus is a necessary, but not sufficient, step toward this goal. We must add to the support students need by creating **community schools** with **extended hours for students and staff**. The Partners believe this is one way to meet the intent of the proposed funding formula to focus attention on high poverty student populations.

Especially with a declining economy, we need to create **community schools** that serve our most needy children by bringing together all the services they and their families need, such as:

- Schools that are open all day and after school;
- High schools that help students earn diplomas by allowing them to sign up for morning, afternoon or evening classes; and
- Schools offering services from child care and counseling, to dental and medical care, to English language instruction and GED programs—all of which improve students' educational outcomes and general well-being.

Working in a high-poverty school requires more time for direct professional work with students. The Partners recommend that **high-poverty schools have 1/2 hour of added time at the beginning and end of each day** for the purposes of supporting schools and staff with the time needed for intervention and prevention services to our most vulnerable children, families and neighborhoods. This should include professional time for teachers and other professionals and time for small group tutoring as well as after school activities for students.

- The opportunity to do their jobs well and earn extra salary in high poverty schools can serve as means to attract highly motivated staff to these schools.
- In addition, the extra time supports the creation of community schools, another proven way to address the needs of high poverty student populations.

The legislature must support school districts in a manner that allows time during the normal teacher work day or year to sufficiently address professional needs, including, but not limited to planning, assessment analysis, professional development and collaboration with other members of the professional school team. This will provide greater opportunities to address student needs and help close achievement gaps. The funding formula will provide the additional staffing, giving schools flexibility to make this happen.

Report of the National Education Commission on  
Time and Learning  
April 1994

*RECOMMENDATION V:  
GIVE TEACHERS THE TIME THEY NEED*

WE RECOMMEND that teachers be provided with the professional time and opportunities they need to do their jobs.

The daily working life of most teachers is one of unrelieved time pressure and isolation; they work, largely alone, in a classroom of 25-30 children or adolescents for hours every day. Unlike teachers in many systems overseas, who can take advantage of continuous, daily opportunities for professional development, American teachers have little time for preparation, planning, cooperation, or professional growth.

The Commission believes that time for planning and professional development is urgently needed-not as a frill or an add-on, but as a major aspect of the agreement between teachers and districts.

The whole question of teachers and time needs to be rethought in a serious and systematic way. **The issue is not simply teachers. It is not just time. The real issue is education quality.**

Teachers need time to develop effective lessons. They need time to assess students in meaningful ways and discuss the results with students individually. They need time to talk to students, and listen to them, and to confer with parents and other family members. They need time to read professional journals, interact with their colleagues, and watch outstanding teachers demonstrate new strategies.

In order to teach well, teachers must spend time planning, preparing and assessing student's work.

Teachers are also currently working to learn, implement, master and adhere to the following initiatives, programs, reforms and mandates:

- ✓ RTI Documentation and Interventions
- ✓ Continuous Improvement/SQS
- ✓ AYP School Improvement Requirements
- ✓ Curriculum Mapping
- ✓ Student Assistance Team
- ✓ Vertical Teaming
- ✓ America's Choice
- ✓ High School Redesign
- ✓ Short Cycle Assessments
- ✓ Academic Improvement Plans
- ✓ Professional Learning Communities
- ✓ Mid-term Progress Reports
- ✓ DRA Rubrics and DIBELS Testing
- ✓ Evidence Folders
- ✓ Pacing Guides
- ✓ Core Programs
- ✓ Intervention Programs
- ✓ Teaching with fidelity
- ✓ Attending PD
- ✓ Collecting and Recording Data
- ✓ Volunteering for Committees and Goal Teams
- ✓ Contacting Parent(s)
- ✓ Standards-Based Testing
- ✓ Extra-curricular Activities and Sports
- ... and more



## Goal 2: Competitive Salaries

**We must continue our effort to attract and retain qualified professionals.**

Nearly half of all new teachers leave their classrooms within five years and as many as 1/3 of the nation's teaching force is ready for retirement.

New Mexico recently did a great deal for teacher's salaries and teachers are grateful. However, between the time when the minimum salaries of 30-40-50 were conceived and when they were fully implemented was a period of over 10 years. According to NEA, New Mexico's average teacher salary in 04-05 was 40<sup>th</sup>. AFT ranked educator salaries for the same year slightly better, at 37<sup>th</sup>.

What was originally considered a large salary for our state's teachers is now considered low to moderate compared other states in the region. If not this year, then soon, the minimums must be increased if we are to continue to attract and retain the best.

Furthermore, we must continue to work on this compensation system in order to create a career ladder that attracts new **teachers** and retains our experienced work force. The compensation system created by the 3-Tiered minimums is now a "forced-marriage" with our broken salary step system. Many of our state's teachers wonder if they will make the minimum salaries for the rest of their careers. Teachers must be supported and acknowledged for their years of service, added responsibilities and for their additional education and credentials.

State funding must be provided so that local districts can honor experienced teachers and the credentials they hold. Ideally, changes would:

- Create a mechanism to get the additional funding to the employees and school districts.
- Allow employees and school districts to design changes that honor education and experience and incorporate the minimum salary levels required by law.
- Fund beyond the minimum salaries by attaching weight and compensation to experience and credentials for increases in salaries.

**Custodians, Educational Assistants, Secretaries, and Cafeteria Workers** provide essential services in our public schools. These workers must make a living wage. According to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) a one parent—one child family should be making at least \$31,000.

Custodians, Educational Assistants, Secretaries, and Cafeteria Workers are unable to sustain their families and save for their own children's education. All of these beginning salaries—and experienced salaries for that matter—are far less than the \$31,000 figure cited above.



We are losing **principals** at an alarming rate. We must attract and retain the best or we will lose our teachers and schools will decline. Leadership matters. As the final report on report on SJM3 notes:

- National research indicates that school leadership is second only to teaching among school related factors that affect student learning.
- The total number of administration degrees awarded by ENMU, NMHU, NMSU and WNMU has declined 43% since 2003 and superintendents report difficulties in attracting high quality candidates into the principalship.

Last year, school employees were faced with a cost of living increase for the current school year of 4% and a salary increase of 2%. A personal deficit for teachers and most school employees of 2%.

Increasing salaries by an additional 5% next year will help school employees stay even with the cost of living and provide some ability to recover from the loss of purchasing power caused by the gap between this year's salary increase and the federal October-to-October cost-of-living increase.

**For the current year we are asking that the state  
save a little less to invest in our children's future.  
We recommend:**

- No education cuts.
- A 5% salary increase for next year, which will help school employees stay even with the cost of living.

The difference between the estimated revenue needed to fund the new funding formula this year alone (\$340-380 million) and the amount a 1% increase in the GRT would raise (approximately \$475-500 million) is urgently needed for many educational priorities including salary increases.

For next year providing a 1% Gross Receipts Tax increase covers the needed sufficiency funding and the needed 5% salary increase.

If the New Mexico legislature agrees to save a little less and institute the 1% Gross Receipts Tax increase we can, even during difficult economic times, invest in our public schools. We can invest \$380 million new dollars to pay for the funding formula and \$110 million dollars to provide a 5% raise to all public school employees.

### **An Important End Note:**

The New Mexico Education Partners will oppose any effort to create a larger gap between PERA and ERA. We will also oppose any effort to create two classes of school employees—with two different levels of retirement. We think it's a good idea to gradually increase the multiplier for those employees who stay past 25 years. This will keep present employees paying into the system NOW, having an immediate positive impact on the retirement fund, instead of having a 25 year wait for actual monetary infusion into the fund.

