



National Education Association-New Mexico 2017 Legislative Goals

1. Fewer regulations—more local decisions

A. **Creating a Tax Structure to Guarantee Future Education Funding:** The legislature must address the issues of making our state tax structure equitable and sufficient to close loopholes and leveling the playing field for big and small businesses in our state. This principle must guide efforts to identify new funding streams to meet the constitutional mandate for sufficient investment in our public schools.

B. **Adequately Funding Fixed Costs:** We advocate funding increases to provide for built-in fixed costs as well as to provide flexibility at the local school district level so employees and school districts, working together, through collective bargaining, may determine local priorities.

C. **Returning State Policy Regarding Public Schools to the Voters:** We support a constitutional amendment to place the authority currently placed in the Appointed Secretary of Education in an elected State Board of Education, and a Superintendent of Public Instruction hired by that Board, who must be an experienced New Mexico licensed professional educator.

2. More learning—fewer tests

A. **Student Assessments:** Varied performance assessments, including, but not limited to, a statewide criterion-referenced test, must be authentic and actually assess whether rigorous standards for student learning are being met. The development of curricular standards and their accompanying assessment system is a legitimate State priority, funded through legislative appropriation. A single high-stakes standardized norm-referenced exam must not be a part of this accountability system but may be used for benchmarking our education system with national standards. These assessments must be used for diagnosis of student needs, improvement of instruction, and not for high stakes decisions about students' futures, staff evaluations, or school grading. Assessments which purport to measure change in performance over time within a student cohort group must be designed to measure the progress of the same students from year to year, not simply the students who happen

to be in each grade level at a given school, whether or not they were a part of the cohort the preceding year.

3. More funding—fewer mandates

A. **Prioritize Education Funding:** The legislature must meet its constitutional responsibility to sufficiently fund New Mexico’s public schools so we are able to increase student success by meeting our students’ many and diverse academic, behavioral, cultural, and social needs. To meet this responsibility, the legislature must commit the necessary revenue sources. Funding distribution must be fair among all school districts; the best way to accomplish this is to move all funding through the Public School Equalization Guarantee.

B. **Preserving Public Funding.** The legislature must continue to resist schemes to privatize the education of any public school students. Privatization is an abdication of public accountability which cannot be tolerated. The schools must remain under the control of entities governed by and for the people. Legislation must prevent ceding control of students’ education to private, for-profit providers whether the programs are delivered on-site or through virtual technology.

C. **Preventing Vouchers, Tax Credits, Public Scholarships or Other Schemes to Privatize Public Schools.** The New Mexico State Constitution requires a system of free uniform public schools. The limited financial educational resources of the state must be directed toward fulfillment of this constitutional mandate. We oppose any attempts to use public funds for private school vouchers, tuition tax credits for attendance at a private school, home school, or for-profit management of public schools.

D. **Guaranteeing Adequate Recurring Revenues:** Over the last ten years, the percentage of general fund revenues allocated to public schools has decreased. Public schools and higher education must receive their traditional share of general fund revenues. It’s time to end the failed strategy of tax breaks for the rich and profitable, and adopt a strategy that will provide sufficient revenue for what does matter—a world-class education system, excellent health care, good infrastructure, and safe communities. We support increases in funding to provide an adequately funded public education for every New Mexico student.

E. **Building Higher Education Funding Equity:** Recent higher education funding cuts must be restored, and no additional cuts made. Higher Education must be sufficiently funding through a statutorily defined formula similar to that contained in the School Finance Act for Public Schools. Creation of this formula should not adversely affect the funding of any institution. Funding must be provided to allow institutions of higher education to prioritize faculty and staff salary increases over higher education capital outlay.

4. More graduates—fewer drop outs

A. Legislation should be passed to address issues pertaining to poverty and quality of life for students, parents and the community as a whole. This legislation should include but not be limited to increasing the minimum wage to a living wage based on community standards, providing access to quality public early education, and increasing student health and well-being.

B. Class size limit: Restore class size limitations in statute by ending blanket waivers. Restore staff and the funding needed to honor current statutory class size and student load requirements, including case load requirements for support services professionals that best meet student needs.

C. Ensuring Equitable Student Opportunity: Systems must be in place to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn and perform to their full potential. New Mexico must maintain appropriate support for students with priority needs, such as special education, gifted, and English Language Learners. We support programs that educate the whole child. These programs include physical education, fine arts and vocational programs taught by licensed qualified teachers.

D. Providing Adequate High Quality Health Care. All New Mexicans deserve access to affordable, high-quality health care, including mental health care. We must make health care more affordable for all New Mexicans, including those who are already covered. Any real solution to making health care more affordable for everybody must start with the commitment that all New Mexicans should have health care coverage.

5. More respect—less blame

A. Building an Appropriate School Employee Evaluation System: The quality of the education work force is paramount to student success. School employees want to be accountable, and the public rightly demands this, too. We support fair evaluation systems to appropriately measure teacher impact on student achievement. Standardized test scores cannot provide this measure. The evaluation system may include voluntary peer interventions and/or observations that do not contribute to summative evaluations. Only trained and certified administrators should evaluate school employees. Evaluations must be fair and impartial and should be based on multiple objective observations. Guidance, support, and opportunities for continuing professional development and growth must be at the core of the evaluative process. Licensure advancement must be fair and transparent and equally available to all licensed employees. It should not be a subterfuge for merit pay schemes.

B. Induction and Mentoring: The legislature must restore dedicated resources for programs of induction and mentoring for all public education employees. Colleges of education should be

encouraged and funded to collaborate with and provide support for teacher induction and mentoring in public schools. State mandates for District provided mentor programs must be funded.

C. Due Process and Just Cause. Preserve and enhance current protections and extend them to employees in higher education and supervisory employees. All education employees must be protected from adverse job actions through a statutory due process procedure that guarantees just cause for all discipline and job related decisions of educational management.

D. Sustaining Collective Bargaining. To ensure all education employees have the right to negotiate the terms and conditions of their employment, we must maintain and enhance New Mexico's Public Employee Bargaining Act. The ability of all employees to have fair access to the benefits of collective bargaining is an important way to combat poverty. Therefore, we oppose so-called "Right-to-Work" legislation and any other efforts to diminish the influence of Unions in the workplace.

E. Protecting Retiree Health Care. Annual funding must be sufficient to maintain the commitment made on behalf of the citizens of New Mexico to public employees. When the New Mexico Retiree Health Care Authority (NMRHCA) was created, it was not a pre-funded retirement benefits program. We support limited increases in employee and employer withholdings to improve the solvency of the system, if fully funded by the state.

F. Safeguarding School Employee Retirement. Retirement credit is an important part of the compensation school employees earn. It is not a "gift" from the taxpayers! All education employees should be afforded the full benefits of retirement, without offsets for other pension plans. New Mexico's educational retirement plan must remain a fully funded defined benefit plan. The legislature must ensure the financial security of the New Mexico Educational Retirement Association through proposals that have the input and support of the stakeholder groups comprising the ERB membership.

G. Providing Affordable Health Insurance for Education Employees. Escalating health insurance premiums and/or benefit decreases have decreased overall compensation of education employees. Appropriate health care options must be provided by the legislature. The statutory limit for employer paid insurance premiums subsidies must be increased and funded to maintain benefit levels and hold employees harmless for premium increases.

H. Providing Pay Equity and a Living Wage for All School Employees: Educational assistants must have appropriate minimum salaries tied to a tiered licensure system. The system must assure adequate compensation, professional development, and assistance to meet the requirements of federal law and provide career and professional advancement for paraprofessionals.

I. Legislation should be enacted and funded to direct educational employers to provide salary schedules to promote career advancement and advanced training for educational support professionals/paraprofessionals. Licensed and/or certified skilled trades employees in public schools must receive pay commensurate to private sector licensed or certified professionals.