

Transforming Education in New Mexico: Shared Principles for an Effective Partnership

Transforming the New Mexico education system requires a partnership between state and school district leaders built on mutual trust and common goals. Over the past 20 years our education system has become more centralized and burdened by federal and state mandates. Innovation has been impeded by diminished local control and the degradation of dialog between professionals. We have a moral and economic obligation to eliminate these obstacles to the creation of effective student-centered learning environments.

To initiate the partnership we ask all gubernatorial candidates to endorse the strategic planning effort cited below and to commit to broad consultation with educational leaders in the nomination and confirmation of the next Public Education Secretary. Long-term success will require sustained collaboration on the following three critical actions.

We must clearly define and balance the differing roles of state and local leaders.

The Governor, Legislature, and Secretary of Public Education with school district input must provide:

- Funding that is sufficient and equitable to all districts with provision for local discretion and flexibility
- Standards for graduation, curricula, and licensure
- Technical assistance and reliable data systems for meeting federal, state and local evaluation requirements

District school boards and superintendents must provide:

- Qualified and effective teachers, administrators, and other support staff
- An environment where all personnel work together to develop and sustain positive learning experiences
- Curricula that meet federal, state and local requirements while achieving desired student outcomes
- Site-based data collection and analysis for evaluation of students and staff

We must have a common vision built on the following framework.

- A clear description of the skills and knowledge students are expected to have upon graduation
- Research-based modes of assessment that reflect what students will encounter after graduation
- The current 18-month strategic planning effort led by the New Mexico School Superintendents Association with support from other education, business, nonprofit, and government leaders
- The current Legislative Education Study Committee effort to guide legislation based on international benchmarks of successful education systems in the *No Time to Lose* report from the National Conference of State Legislatures

We must work to strengthen the following elements that support public education.

- Early childhood education and healthcare so all children begin school ready to learn
- State programs that provide socio-economic and emotional support for students and families across New Mexico
- Partnerships between educators, community leaders, government officials, and healthcare providers that foster school safety
- Best practices in continuous improvement such as those identified by AdvancED New Mexico, Quality New Mexico, and the University of Virginia School Turnaround Program
- Technological infrastructure projects that equalize access and high service standards Statewide.
- A working coalition of teachers, administrators, leaders of higher education and schools of education to determine the root causes of the current shortage of teaching professionals
- Implementation of short-term and long-term approaches that assure teachers are well-prepared, well-compensated, and well-supported throughout their careers