

Strong Leaders For New Mexico Schools

*Senate Joint Memorial 3: Report &
Recommendations*

A Report to the Legislative Education Study
Committee



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Introduction

This report is respectfully submitted to the New Mexico Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) by the Office of Education Accountability (OEA), the Public Education Department (PED) and the Higher Education Department (HED) as required in Senate Joint Memorial (SJM) 3: Recruitment and Preparation of Principals and Other School Leaders. SJM3 was passed unanimously by the 2007 New Mexico Legislature and calls for OEA, PED, and HED to collaborate with school districts and institutions of higher education in the development of a plan to enhance the recruitment, preparation, mentoring, evaluation, professional development and support for school principals and other educational leaders.

The development and implementation of such a plan is critically important to New Mexico because the quality of the principal is essential to improving student achievement. New Mexico is making an historic effort to systematically improve its education system from preschool to graduate school, and it is critical to ensure that the state has an adequate supply of well-prepared and effective leaders at every level of the PreK-20 system.

This report presents the recommendations of many of the state's most knowledgeable and influential educational leaders including superintendents, principals, teachers, college deans, university and college faculty, staff from state and legislative agencies, members of the business community and others who took part in statewide meetings, focus groups, and surveys from February 2008 to October 2008. During this eight-month period, these leaders:

- Examined supply and demand, turnover and other data from New Mexico related to principals, superintendents, and other leaders in higher education leadership preparation programs, schools and districts in New Mexico;
- Examined national research reports on the importance of school leadership and student success; examined models of school leadership initiatives in other states; and brought in consultants from some of the most successful programs in the country; and
- Considered existing federal, state, and district policies that impact the recruitment, preparation, mentoring, and professional development of school leaders and developed six recommendations for strengthening New Mexico's capacity to attract and retain strong school leaders.

We believe that the six recommendations in this report will support Governor Richardson's and the Legislature's bold work in improving New Mexico's public education system and improving the future for our children and our state.

Background

Over the last 18 years, national studies commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Southern Regional Education Board and others have called for new approaches to the recruitment, preparation, and support of school principals and other school leaders. Many states, including Illinois, New York, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Massachusetts, have implemented new statutes, developed incentives, designed leadership institutes and other innovative initiatives to strengthen school leadership.

Consider these facts about student achievement and school leadership in New Mexico:

- In 2008, 68.2% of New Mexico's schools did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).
- Research nationally indicates that school leadership is second only to teaching among school related factors that affect student learning; research in New Mexico indicates that student achievement in math and reading is significantly related to the total years of a principal's experience in the district.
- Between 1994 and 2004, 51% of New Mexico's schools had 3 or more principals.
- The average age of school principals in New Mexico is 51. Thirty-three percent of school principals are 55 years of age or older and 15% are 60 years of age or older. New Mexico school district superintendents report difficulties in attracting high-quality candidates into the principalship.
- The total number of Education Administration degrees and certificates awarded by Eastern New Mexico University, New Mexico Highlands University, New Mexico State University, Western New Mexico University, and the University of New Mexico has declined 43% since 2003.
- In 2008, a statewide study indicated that between 20% and 50% of graduates from educational leadership programs did not feel adequately prepared to:
 - create coherent educational programs across a school;
 - build and sustain an educational vision for a school;
 - handle discipline;
 - develop broad agreement among staff about a school's mission;
 - work with parents to support students' learning;
 - use data to monitor school progress, identify problems, and propose solutions; or
 - engage staff in comprehensive planning for school improvement.

If New Mexico is to utilize its people, time and other resources to improve student success, effective school leadership is critical. It is the school principal who sets the climate for professionalism and support within the school; influences which teachers are hired and whether they stay; holds teachers accountable for student learning; determines resource allocation to support learning; and builds relationships with parents and the greater community.

The wide range of constituents who contributed to the development of this report is reflective of the many factors that influence the quality of school leaders. Colleges and universities, school districts, professional organizations, the Public Education Department, the Higher Education Department, the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and federal government all have an impact on how school leaders are prepared and how they do their jobs. In the worst case, the efforts of these organizations would be at cross purposes, placing principals and their school communities in the middle of competing forces. In the best case, all of these organizations would work collaboratively to produce and support strong leaders. Our expectation is that New Mexico will build this best case through the recommendations in this report.

Recommendation 1: Revitalize School Principal Standards

Action Steps

Review, revise, and align school principal standards: The PED, working in collaboration with educational leadership preparation faculty, school districts, and professional organizations should review and revise the current standards (administrative licensure competencies and indicators identified in NMAC 6.62.2.10). The revised standards should focus specifically on what principals need to know and be able to do to improve student learning in PreK-12 schools. In addition, these revised standards for principals should be aligned with New Mexico's statewide standards of evaluation for principals and assistant principals.

Implement a standards-based approval process for leadership preparation programs: The PED, working in collaboration with colleges of education, the National Council for Teacher Accreditation (NCATE), school districts, and professional organizations should prepare and implement a revised, standards-based approval process for all educational leadership preparation programs in New Mexico.

Rationale: It is essential to clearly state what is expected of principals, define their responsibilities, and delineate what they must know and be able to do to meet those responsibilities. Because we want principals to be instructional leaders focused on improving student achievement, it is essential that we clearly identify the competencies that aspiring principals must develop and that practicing principals must subsequently master. Over the past several years, the focus of college and university educational leadership programs has shifted from educational administration to general leadership skills. Courses and experiences specifically designed to address the knowledge and skills needed by school principals have become less common in these programs. While the study of leadership is important in all fields, it is important to provide prospective school principals with the specific skills that will enable them to succeed in that particular role. To support this goal, some courses will need to be redesigned for inclusion in revised programs.

In New Mexico, two documents provide the framework for both the preparation and evaluation of school principals. The Administrator Licensure Competencies and Indicators (NMAC 6.62.2.10) include nine broad forms of leadership—from ethical to political to professional leadership—that are further defined by one hundred discrete indicators of competence. This document has not been the subject of significant review and revision since being adopted more than a decade ago. The newly designed framework for the evaluation of principals and assistant principals was adopted in July 2008. Evaluations are based on a second set of Principal Leadership Competencies and Indicators (NMPLCI) that are organized around four domains of leadership (with a fifth domain applicable only to secondary administrators) and 19 indicators of competence. Review and revision of these two pivotal documents will provide alignment between two differing sets of standards as well as add the necessary emphasis on the principal's responsibility for improving curriculum, instruction, and student learning.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen Recruitment, Incentives and Retention

Action Steps

Identify potential school leaders: The OEA, in collaboration with HED and PED, should develop databases to gather and maintain information on the numbers and kinds of potential leaders within and across New Mexico's school districts. Such potential leaders might include content leaders, instructional coaches, department chairpersons, team leaders, deans of students, and other educators in leadership positions.

Develop financial incentives: Financial and other incentives are needed to encourage and support greater numbers of educators in pursuing school leadership positions. The HED and the PED in collaboration with districts, professional organizations, and the New Mexico Legislature should develop incentives including a principal loan for service program, apprenticeships and internships.

- HED, PED and school districts should explore ways to implement principal loan for service programs that support talented individuals seeking to become principals in New Mexico schools.
- PED and school districts should explore innovative ways to provide aspiring principals with financial support so that these individuals can spend adequate time in meaningful administrative-related internships.

Address principals' working conditions to retain effective school leaders: We not only need to attract additional, talented individuals to leadership positions, we need to retain and sustain the successful and effective principals who are currently in service. The districts, professional organizations, and the PED should collaborate to address the often lonely and always demanding role of the principal, particularly in high-need schools where the impact of principal turnover is especially acute and the working conditions are notably more stressful.

- Districts can sponsor mentoring programs for principals, especially for novice principals and those in schools in need of improvement (SINOI). Effective mentoring programs for principals result in greater job satisfaction and increased enthusiasm for the very demanding work of building-level leadership.
- Universities, districts and the PED should explore models for the internship that would provide real-life, real-time opportunities for aspiring school leaders where they would take on some of the responsibilities of the principal. This would lessen the principal's stress and afford interns the opportunity to learn to lead rather than merely follow.
- The PED should work with districts and other stakeholders to develop and establish a much broader set of indicators to determine what is meant by school success. The "all or none" vision of success promoted by AYP and standardized testing does great damage to the morale of everyone in schools, especially to principals whose schools are labeled as "failing."

Rationale: Too many states, including New Mexico, continue to rely on a voluntary pool of applicants to educational leadership preparation programs who might seek to become principals. School districts, universities, and the PED can work together to recruit, select, and prepare those future principals who hold the greatest promise of improving student achievement. Rather than wait for future school leaders to self-select into the profession, we need to use a variety of strategies to identify, cultivate, prepare, and sustain promising leaders who do not yet hold formal leadership positions. These might include master teachers with proven track records of improving student achievement; teachers who have demonstrated leadership potential through their participation on instructional councils and other leadership teams; or other educators who have demonstrated leadership skills in a variety of school situations and settings. Once identified, these potential leaders should be provided effective incentives and support to undertake the preparation to become principals.

In addition to refocusing university leadership preparation programs (see Recommendation 1), this means creating internships and other real-world opportunities where teacher leaders learn to become principals. At the same time, it is imperative that we better understand why some potential leaders are unwilling to become principals. Working conditions are perhaps the most important set of factors related to the successful recruitment and retention of a new wave of principals. Research from the Council of Chief State School Officers suggests that circumstances that deter talented individuals from accepting principal positions include difficult working conditions, inadequate incentives, ineffective hiring practices, and formidable expectations for success, particularly in high-need schools. Without concurrent attention to workplace conditions, renewed recruitment, preparation, and retention efforts will have limited impact.

Recommendation 3: Develop and Implement the New Mexico Leadership Institute

Action Steps

Create a collaborative set of relationships and cooperative infrastructure for strengthening school leadership: New Mexico should develop a comprehensive and cohesive framework for strengthening the preparation, mentoring and professional development of principals and other school leaders. The New Mexico Institute should build on the lessons learned and models developed by other leadership institutes, including the Arkansas Leadership Institute, the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement, Illinois Distinguished Principal Institute, Kentucky Leadership Institute, Massachusetts Commonwealth School Leadership Project, New York City Leadership Academy, and South Carolina Office of School Leadership. New Mexico should authorize and fund the New Mexico Leadership Institute.

Establish collaborative partnerships that support leadership development: One of the most effective ways to develop the relationships and infrastructure described above is through the establishment of a statewide collaborative Leadership Institute. The Institute will have five programs based on partnerships among school districts, higher education, regional education cooperatives, state agencies, professional organizations and others.

PROGRAM 1: Licensure For Aspiring Principals

This program will provide aspiring principals with a track leading to licensure. This program will build on existing district/university partnerships and will be augmented by expanding these partnerships to better meet district needs by including additional curriculum developed in collaboration with national leadership preparation programs.

PROGRAM 2: Mentoring For New Principals

This program will focus on refining skills outlined in the Principal Evaluation System through training and structured mentoring.

PROGRAM 3: Intensive Support for Principals of Schools In Need of Improvement

The program will focus on the specific skills necessary for leading and working in high need schools.

PROGRAM 4: Professional Development For Aspiring Superintendents

The program will provide an intensive internship and mentoring program for experienced principals and other school leaders who wish to become superintendents.

PROGRAM 5: Mentoring For New Superintendents

The New Mexico Coalition of School Administrators (NMCSA) will expand the Superintendents' Transition and Mentoring Program (STAMP) to continue to provide professional and collegial support and professional development to superintendents with less than three years experience.

Rationale: Across the country, the states that are making the most progress in strengthening their school leadership systems have developed statewide leadership institutes. These state-level programs are designed to recruit, prepare, and support school principals. They share several common characteristics: 1) Leadership initiatives are developed through partnerships with state agencies, professional associations, and institutions of higher education; 2) Training for prospective principals addresses specific statewide needs and is accompanied by mentoring and coaching; 3) Learning activities for new principals are experiential, including extended internships, on-the-job-training, professional learning communities, and networking with peers; 4) Finally, strong principal leadership programs have shifted the emphasis from traditional administrative and managerial roles to a focus on the school principal's influence on school effectiveness and student learning.

In addition to developing programs for preparing and supporting principals, New Mexico needs to systematically address the need for individuals with the advanced leadership skills required of superintendents. Between 2003 and 2008, 76.4% of New Mexico's 89 school districts had experienced one or two changes in the superintendent's position. Programs 4 and 5 in the proposed New Mexico Leadership Institute will help ensure that New Mexico has an adequate supply of highly-qualified and effective superintendents who can ensure that entire districts are focused on student success.

Recommendation 4: Establish Data and Accountability Systems

Action Steps

Create data sets to track the career paths of school leaders in New Mexico: OEA, in collaboration with HED and PED, should create data sets that track the career paths of school leaders in New Mexico. The first step will be development of a school leadership database that links higher education and public school data to track supply and demand, projected retirements, and principal and superintendent turnover. This database will be linked with the performance of students, teachers, schools, and districts. A second step will be the development of a system to track the career paths of school leaders, from preparation to employment, to induction and retention. This data base will be developed by using the existing information currently gathered by higher education institutions, the HED, school districts, and the PED.

Include information on school leadership preparation programs in the uniform statewide teacher education accountability reporting system: PED should include information about school leadership preparation programs in the uniform statewide teacher education accountability reporting system required by SB 211 (2007) [22-10A-19.2 NMSA 1978]. The data reported will include entrance requirements, demographic information on students including gender, race/ethnicity, teacher license, previous education, and plans for entering leadership position, program standards, completion rates, and follow-up of graduates. These data sets should become a permanent part of New Mexico's evolving PreK–20 data system.

Rationale: Accurate longitudinal data is a basic requirement for effective accountability systems. The PED and HED have made progress in developing databases that track teachers, student achievement, and other important elements of New Mexico's systemic approach to education reform. These same kinds of data about principals and other school leaders should be gathered and used as the basis for informed decision-making about educational policy.

The development of such a database will also enable the Governor and the Legislature to evaluate the impact of the recommendations in this report on New Mexico's effort to provide strong leaders for the state's schools.

Recommendation 5: Refine Current Certification Requirements

Action Steps

Refine current requirements for administrative licensure: The Legislature should amend the statute for licensure for educational administration, Grades PreK-12 (NMAC 6.62.2.8) so that:

- Prospective principals would be required to have a minimum of 6 years of teaching experience with at least 3 years of experience as a Level Two teacher. Prospective principals must also have met the requirements for a Level Three-A teacher’s license or a Level Three-B administrator’s license.
- The other current requirements for becoming a principal including a Master’s degree in administration or a Master’s plus completion of an approved Administrative Program; completion of an approved internship program; and a passing score on the required state examination for administrators should remain unchanged.

Develop a provisional school administrator license: School districts facing shortages of qualified school leaders should be able to recruit and prepare candidates who have the potential to become effective principals. The PED, in collaboration with HED, OEA, school districts, and universities, should develop a Provisional School Administrator License with the following characteristics:

- School districts would bear the responsibility for requesting and applying for the Provisional License on behalf of the prospective administrator.
- The Provisional License would be renewable for no more than 4 years.

Prospective candidates for a provisional license must:

- a. possess a Level Two teaching license or National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification;
- b. be enrolled in an approved educational administrative program;
- c. be enrolled in an effective and approved administrator induction/mentoring program in the district;
- d. complete and pass the dossier for advancement to Level Three with modifications; and
- e. receive satisfactory evaluations each year of the Provisional License.

Rationale: Determining the right level for state certification requirements for principals and other school leaders is complex. On one hand, certification requirements provide a critical gatekeeper function to ensure that individuals who enter the profession have met certain requirements. On the other hand, stringent certification requirements raise the concern that talented individuals may be excluded from the pool of potential applicants and thus lead to real shortages. In 2003, New Mexico passed the reforms that required new administrators to hold a Level Three-A teacher’s license for one year. In effect, this requires that individuals who wish to become principals will need 7 years of

teaching experience (3 years at Level One+3 years at Level Two+1 year at Level Three). This means that New Mexico requires more years of classroom experience for prospective school administrators than any other state. Over the last two years, New Mexico has taken steps to expand the pool of potential principals by allowing school counselors and college professors to qualify as school administrators under certain circumstances. In 2007, a statewide taskforce convened by the PED in response to SJM15: School Administrator Licensure Pathways, studied the issue of alternative licensure for school administrators and made the recommendations to keep current certification requirements and to develop a provisional school administrator license for those districts facing shortages. Feedback from a number of potential principals gathered during the spring and summer of 2008 indicated that the requirement of holding a Level Three teacher's license for one year before becoming a principal limits the number of potential school leaders. Further conversation with key individuals who served on the SJM15 taskforce led to the recommendations outlined above.

Recommendation 6: Refine and Revitalize University Principal Preparation Programs

Action Steps

Develop core educational leadership curriculum: The Colleges of Education at New Mexico’s universities should collaboratively develop a core educational leadership curriculum that focuses on what principals need to know and be able to do to improve student learning in PreK-12 schools. The development process should include the following components:

- a. Review of admission processes to align program admission standards;
- b. Inclusion of rigorous, systematic student assessments throughout the educational leadership preparation program experience, aligning those assessments with the New Mexico Principal Leadership Competencies and Indicators;
- c. Expansion of clinical experiences throughout the preparation program to accelerate hands-on learning, leading to a more relevant and rigorous internship that would allow students to be fully immersed in the principalship;
- d. Determination of associated cost factors for curriculum redesign and implementation, including financing strategies and funding sources; and
- e. Involvement of district superintendents and highly effective school principals in the curriculum redesign process.

Support transferability of the core curriculum: New Mexico’s universities should develop collaborative agreements among their educational leadership preparation programs and within the university systems that support transferability of the core curriculum.

Partner in the development of the New Mexico Leadership Institute: The Colleges of Education should partner in the development of the New Mexico Leadership Institute and use that structure as a way of aligning and expanding collaborative efforts including:

- a. Sharing and expanding faculty and student resources;
- b. Sharing effective practices for the preparation of school leaders;
- c. Examining current collaborative projects between school districts and universities and strengthening and expanding those efforts; and
- d. Expanding professional development opportunities (including internships) for aspiring principals.

Rationale: Strong collaborations will be necessary to advance the refinement and revitalization of university leadership preparation programs. The described agreements will need to be supported by state and local infrastructure, including the proposed New Mexico Leadership Institute. Faculty and college resources and school district support systems will need to be examined to determine how to best support this revitalization process. Expansion of clinical field experiences and intensive internship experiences will involve a rethinking of resource allocation to fully support high-quality principal preparation. Investing in the revitalization of educational leadership programs and the necessary supportive actions to implement university agreements and curricular design components will have far-reaching effects for New Mexico's students and its PreK-20 educational system. We cannot afford to do less if we are serious about preparing school leaders who can build and sustain the capacity of schools to meet the needs of children, their families, and our society at large. Effective schools for all children are vital to New Mexico's future and they must be led by outstanding school leaders who themselves are the beneficiaries of excellent preparation programs, mentoring, and professional development throughout their careers.

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Senate Joint Memorial 3

Schedule of Meetings

February 21, 2008

Santa Fe Community College
6401 Richards Avenue
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87508

March 20, 2008

University of New Mexico
SUB Acoma A & B
1 University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131

May 2, 2008

CNM Workforce Training Center
Room 101
5600 Eagle Rock Avenue NE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87113

September 12, 2008

Embassy Suites Hotel
1000 Woodward Place NE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102

October 27, 2008

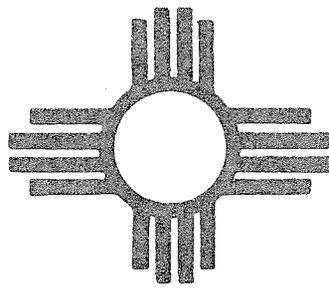
Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott
1201 North Main Street
Roswell, New Mexico 88201

November 6, 2008

Embassy Suites Hotel
1000 Woodward Place NE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102

Appendix

Senate Joint Memorial 3



The Legislature
of the
State of New Mexico

48th Legislature, Second Session

LAWS 2008

CHAPTER _____

SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 3

Introduced by

SENATOR GAY G. KERNAN



FOR THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

1 A JOINT MEMORIAL

2 REQUESTING THE OFFICE OF EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE
3 DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION, THE PUBLIC
4 EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND THE HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TO
5 DEVELOP A PLAN TO ENHANCE THE RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION,
6 MENTORING, EVALUATION, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT
7 FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND OTHER SCHOOL LEADERS.

8
9 WHEREAS, the 2003 school reform legislation placed more
10 responsibility for personnel and instruction upon principals
11 and superintendents; and

12 WHEREAS, more recent legislation in 2007 increased the
13 minimum salaries of school principals and assistant
14 principals according to a responsibility factor; and

15 WHEREAS, research shows that the influence of effective
16 school leadership is second only to classroom instruction
17 among school-related factors affecting student learning; and

18 WHEREAS, recruitment, preparation, mentoring,
19 evaluation, professional development and support are as
20 important for school leaders as they are for teachers, and
21 New Mexico does not have a statewide, coordinated approach
22 for the recruitment and retention of school leaders or their
23 professional development; and

24 WHEREAS, a joint study during the 2007 interim by the
25 legislative education study committee, the legislative

1 finance committee and the office of education accountability
2 of the department of finance and administration identified a
3 number of challenges for school leadership and recommended
4 the creation of a systematic plan for the recruitment,
5 preparation, mentoring, evaluation, professional development
6 and support for school principals and other school leaders;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, this joint study found that one-half of New
9 Mexico schools have had three or more principals in the last
10 ten years and thirty-five percent of districts have had three
11 or more superintendents in the last four years; and

12 WHEREAS, this study also found that, according to the
13 education commission of the states, New Mexico requires more
14 years of teaching experience to obtain an administrator's
15 license than other states;

16 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
17 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the office of education
18 accountability of the department of finance and
19 administration, the public education department and the
20 higher education department be requested to collaborate with
21 school districts and institutions of higher education to
22 develop a plan to enhance the recruitment, preparation,
23 mentoring, evaluation, professional development and support
24 for school principals and other school leaders in order to
25 ensure an adequate supply of effective school leaders; and

1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the plan include such
2 components as a review of successful strategies used in other
3 states for the identification and recruitment of individuals
4 with leadership potential; an examination of whether existing
5 requirements for school administrator licenses limit the pool
6 of potential school leaders; and the development of ongoing
7 procedures to monitor, coordinate and strengthen professional
8 development for school leaders, with a focus on professional
9 development for principals of schools in need of improvement;
10 and

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the office of education
12 accountability of the department of finance and
13 administration, the public education department and the
14 higher education department report their findings and
15 recommendations to the legislative education study committee
16 by November 1, 2008; and

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, before the plan is
18 implemented, it be reviewed by the legislative education
19 study committee; and

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
21 transmitted to the secretary of public education, the
22 secretary of higher education, the secretary of finance and
23 administration and the director of the legislative education
24 study committee.

s/Diane D. Denish

Diane D. Denish, President
Senate

s/Lenore M. Naranjo

Lenore M. Naranjo, Chief Clerk
Senate

s/Ben Lujan

Ben Lujan, Speaker
House of Representatives

s/Stephen R. Arias

Stephen R. Arias, Chief Clerk
House of Representatives