



TRANSFORM
EDUCATION
NM

WHAT WORKS

STUDENT-CENTERED INITIATIVES & BUDGET NARRATIVES

TRANSFORM
EDUCATION NM

Funding & Accountability
Youth
Meaningful
Intentional
Engagement
Examples

Accountability
Students providing meaningful impact
Intentional
TRANSPARENCY

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Introduction

What Works outlines a set of student-centered policy and budget initiatives that reflect what New Mexico students, families, and educators have long told us they need and what research, practice, and lived experience continue to confirm. Grounded in the findings of the Yazzie/Martinez decision and shaped by years of community-based work across the state, this document lifts up concrete investments that strengthen educational equity by addressing root causes rather than symptoms.

Together, these initiatives center multilingual learners, students with disabilities, Indigenous students, and students from low-income communities groups that have been historically underserved by New Mexico's education system and explicitly named in the court's ruling. Rather than framing these students through a lens of deficit, **What Works** highlights their assets, identities, languages, cultures, and aspirations, and focuses on building systems that are responsive, sustaining, and accountable.

The initiatives included here span the full educational continuum, from early literacy and biliteracy development, to culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and curriculum, to graduation pathways, behavioral health, and workforce-aligned learning opportunities. While each proposal stands on its own, together they represent a coherent strategy for systems change one that prioritizes capacity-building, long-term sustainability, and partnership with communities across New Mexico.

Importantly, many of these initiatives are already in prototype or early implementation stages, with promising results. This document calls for targeted legislative investment to scale what is already working, strengthen state and local capacity, and ensure continuity across administrations. The budget narratives that follow are not abstract requests; they are grounded in real programs, real educators, and real students whose success depends on thoughtful, sustained public investment.

What Works is both a roadmap and an invitationan opportunity for lawmakers, agency leaders, and advocates to align policy and funding with evidence, community wisdom, and New Mexico's constitutional obligation to provide every child with an equitable education that truly meets their needs.

Biliteracy Development Training Program, to Complement the Science of Reading

Description: A uniform, sustained Biliteracy Development Training Program is designed to complement the state's literacy initiative of strengthening students' reading in English as well as their home language. To help students reach high levels of proficiency in two languages, teachers and leaders in bilingual and dual language programs must understand program expectations and allowances under New Mexico's Bilingual Multicultural Education Act for language development, as well as administrative rules developed by the NMPED. By systematically embedding a deeper foundational biliteracy knowledge into the basic expectation that teachers and leaders receive, they will be better suited to plan for and meet the distinct skills required for literacy in two languages, including non-English languages.

Research and practice related to bilingual/biliteracy development have underscored the importance of supporting students in developing metalinguistic awareness (how languages work) and cross-linguistic connections (how their two languages are similar and how they differ).

This training program would fund a uniform statewide approach to providing educators with the necessary information needed to adequately serve our multilingual student community. Biliteracy in New Mexico is not a support, it's a right. This plan ensures that New Mexico's teachers and leaders are supported to do this work with both rigor and respect, allowing students to realize the many benefits associated with becoming bilingual and biliterate while promoting cultural pride, identity, and engagement.

Stage of Development and Implementation: This is in the prototype stage. In the first year (2026) 125 teachers will participate, in year 2 (2027) 250 will participate, and in year 3 (2028) 500 teachers will participate. Training and virtual coaching will roll out in year one with 1st and 2nd grade teachers as it is most urgent. In year two a training for third grade would be developed and rolled out. Year 3 will include fourth grade, and so on for subsequent years as the training is sustained.

Subgroups Effected: Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, Economically Disadvantaged Students, and Indigenous Students.

Capacity Building to Scale and Needed Systems Change: The budget provided includes support for state-based experts to support the growth of the training program so that it can persist over time and across administrations. In addition, building local capacity is essential to ensure that the state can serve the communities with organizations that represent them. The intent is for this training program to become a permanent partnership after the initial three year period and demonstration of success. **Cost:** \$1.5 million–2026, \$2.1 million–2027, \$3.4 million–2028, and recurring.

Previous Legislative Requests: The Bilingual Multicultural Education Act of 1973 established the framework for bilingual multicultural education programs (BMEPs) in New Mexico, providing funding and emphasizing the importance of using students' home or heritage languages as a medium of instruction.

House Bill 330 (2014) passed and became law, authorizing school districts to award the State Seal of Bilingualism-Biliteracy (SSBB). This bill established a formal recognition for biliteracy and encourages language study.

House Joint Memorial 3 was introduced and passed in the New Mexico Legislature during the 2023 session to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the New Mexico Bilingual Multicultural Education Act (BMEA) of 1973. Key aspects of HJM 3:

- The Memorial honored the 50th anniversary of the Bilingual Multicultural Education Act and requested the Governor to declare 2023 as "The Year of Bilingual Multicultural Education".
- The memorial acknowledged that bilingualism and multilingualism have always been a reality in New Mexico.
- It celebrated the diverse languages and cultures of New Mexico.
- The memorial also included requests for the NM PED related to the implementation and evaluation of Bilingual Multicultural Education Programs.

New legislation would prioritize a uniform, statewide Biliteracy Development Training Program that equips teachers and leaders with the knowledge and tools to effectively foster literacy in both English and students' home languages, in alignment with the Bilingual Multicultural Education Act. By embedding this training into the state's literacy initiative, educators will be prepared to cultivate metalinguistic awareness, strengthen cross-linguistic connections, and uphold biliteracy as a right—ensuring students gain the academic, cultural, and personal benefits of becoming truly bilingual and biliterate.

Related Resources:

1. **Californians Together. (2024).** Voices from the Field: Perspectives on literacy instruction for multilingual learners. Multilingual Literacy. <https://multilingualliteracy.org>. Highlights the need for biliteracy-focused PD to counterbalance monolingual Science of Reading mandates.
2. **Escamilla, K., Hopewell, S., & Butvilofsky, S. (2022).** Biliteracy from the start: Literacy squared in action. Multilingual Literacy. <https://multilingualliteracy.org>. Demonstrates that well-implemented dual language programs significantly enhance academic and literacy outcomes for emergent bilinguals.
3. **National Committee for Effective Literacy. (2023).** Effective literacy instruction for multilingual learners: What it is and why it matters. Multilingual Literacy. <https://multilingualliteracy.org/research/>. Emphasizes integrating the science of reading with multilingual strategies, cross-linguistic transfer, and culturally sustaining pedagogy.
4. **New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee. (2022).** Report on Bilingual Education. This report offers an analysis of the state's bilingual education programs, including funding, program types, and student outcomes.
5. **New Mexico Public Education Department. (2022).** Biliteracy Guidance Document. This document provides guidance for school districts on how to implement and support programs that lead to biliteracy, which is the ability to read and write proficiently in two languages.
6. **Pearson, P. D., et al. (2020).** Building comprehension for multilingual learners. In Handbook of Reading Research (Vol. V). Identifies oral language, vocabulary, grammar, and cross-linguistic connections as essential components of comprehension instruction for multilingual students.
7. **The Reading League and National Committee for Effective Literacy (NCEL). (2022).** Joint Statement on Biliteracy. This document outlines a shared position on the importance of biliteracy and provides recommendations for effective instruction and policy.

CLR Training for Teachers and Leaders

Description: Teachers are the single most important in-school factor for student achievement, yet too often they lack access to the sustained, high-quality professional development (PD) needed to meet the complex needs of New Mexico’s diverse learners. Decades of research confirm that ongoing, job-embedded PD improves instructional quality, increases teacher retention, and directly impacts student success—especially for students from historically underserved communities. The court's ruling requires a fundamental shift in how education is approached, emphasizing cultural and linguistic responsiveness.

The CLR Training for Teachers and Leaders will invest in meaningful, ongoing training for educators who serve multilingual/English learner students. Teachers will engage in professional learning with a focus on culturally and linguistically responsive strategies and techniques designed to support learners in all educational settings. Leaders will broaden their understanding of the diverse needs of students and the critical supports their teachers require. This understanding will lead to more effective decisions that drive systemic change. Teachers and leaders will be equipped to:

- Support English Learners by understanding how language and literacy develop together, and integrating culture and language through oracy and biliteracy (where appropriate), and more deliberately embedding them into instructional goals.
- Serve Indigenous students by implementing culturally and linguistically responsive practices, utilizing tribally-developed/supported materials, and co-designing professional learning with Tribal Nations.
- Address the needs of low-income students through trauma-informed, equity-centered strategies that acknowledge and mitigate the impacts of poverty on learning.
- Meaningfully include multilingual/multicultural students with disabilities by broadening differentiated instruction to address their distinct and intersecting needs.

By funding this initiative, NM can ensure its teachers and leaders are prepared to deliver on the promise of educational equity for the student subgroups in a way that represents, supports, and leverages the assets of their language, culture, and identities. A comprehensive approach to sustained, meaningful support for all teachers and leaders represents a shift from compliance to co-ownership, grounded in partnership with the communities we serve.

Stage of Development and Implementation: This is in the prototype stage. In the first year (2026) 40 teachers and 10 administrators will participate, in year 2 (2027) 100 teachers and 30 administrators will participate, and in year 3 (2028) 250 teachers and 75 administrators will participate. Rollout will increase the number of participants each year and sustain the number of participants in year three moving forward. Each year, a small budget is allocated to update, revise, and add resources, ensuring the program remains tailored more specifically to communities, languages, and local contexts throughout the state.

Subgroups Effected: Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, Economically Disadvantaged Students, and Indigenous Students.

Capacity Building to Scale and Needed Systems Change: The budget provided includes support for state-based experts to support growth of the initiative so that it can persist over

time and across administrations. Building local capacity is essential to ensure that the state can serve the communities with organizations that represent them. The intent is for this training program to become a permanent partnership after the initial three year period and demonstration of success. **Cost:** \$560k–2026, \$930k–2027, \$1.8 million–2028, and recurring.

Previous Legislative Requests: Previous bills have been introduced that directly support PD for educators. For example, HB 111 (2019) expanded the role of Regional Education Cooperatives to provide culturally and linguistically responsive PD, HB 394 (2019) required TESOL endorsements and PD in culture and language, and HB 221 (2020) sought funding for RECs to deliver ongoing PD in these areas. While not all were enacted, these efforts show consistent legislative recognition of PD as essential to improving educational equity.

New legislation would prioritize building state and local capacity—through partnerships with Tribal Nations, state-based experts, and community organizations—to embed trauma-informed, equity-centered practices, support biliteracy/oracy, and co-design professional learning that addresses the intersecting needs of English learners, Indigenous students, low-income students, and students with disabilities.

Related Resources:

1. **Arredondo, S. M., Abrego, M. H., & Menchaca, V. D. (2024).** Instructional Decisions of Elementary Principals for Implementing Dual Language Programs for Emergent Bilinguals. *School Leadership Review*, 19(1), 8.
2. **Byrd, C. M. (2016).** Does culturally relevant teaching work? An examination from student perspectives. *SAGE Open*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016660744>. Finds culturally relevant teaching improves both academic achievement and students' racial/ethnic identity development.
3. **Collier, V. P., & Thomas, W. P. (2009).** Educating English Learners for a Transformed World. *Dual Language Education of New Mexico*.
4. **Escamilla, K., Hopewell, S., & Butvilofsky, S. (2022).** Biliteracy from the start: Literacy squared in action. *Multilingual Literacy*. <https://multilingualliteracy.org>. Demonstrates that well-implemented dual language programs significantly enhance academic and literacy outcomes for emergent bilinguals.
5. **Hanushek, E. A. (2011).** The economic value of higher teacher quality. *Economics of Education Review*, 30(3), 466–479. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2010.12.006>. Confirms teacher quality is the most significant in-school factor for student success, with large effects on long-term outcomes.
6. **Hunt, L. M. (2011).** Learning from success stories: Leadership structures that support dual language programs over time in New York City. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 14(4), 439–456.
7. **Kraft, M. A., Blazar, D., & Hogan, D. (2018).** The effect of teacher coaching on instruction and achievement: A meta-analysis of causal evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 88(4), 547–588. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654318759268>. Found teacher coaching improves instructional quality (~0.49 SD) and student achievement (~0.18 SD), particularly in literacy-focused programs.
8. **National Committee for Effective Literacy (2023).** Effective literacy instruction for multilingual learners: What it is and why it matters. *Multilingual Literacy*. <https://multilingualliteracy.org/research/>. Emphasizes integrating the science of reading with multilingual strategies, cross-linguistic transfer, and culturally sustaining pedagogy.
9. **Pacific Learning. (2025).** Empowering Bilingual Educators: The Critical Role of Ongoing PD in Dual Language Teaching. Ongoing, job-embedded PD is vital—helping dual language teachers refine structured literacy strategies in Spanish, translanguage practices, and biliteracy frameworks tailored to dual-language contexts.
10. **REL Appalachia. (2011).** Culturally responsive practices in schools: A review of the literature. Institute of Education Sciences. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Region/appalachia/Ask-A-REL/10065>. Two years of culturally responsive PD increased student proficiency from 25% to 67% in one case study.

A Comprehensive Repository for Culturally Responsive Education

Description: A statewide educational materials repository will be established as a digital platform, with the potential to expand to a physical location in the future, to support the creation and implementation of culturally and linguistically responsive (CLR) curricula that is place/land-based specific to New Mexican communities. The repository will serve as a centralized hub for existing and new educational materials, ensuring their organization, maintenance, and accessibility for educators across the state.

In addition to housing materials, the center will facilitate the development of professional learning for educators and administrators aligned with these CLR curricula. This initiative emphasizes CLR curricula in the prototype phase while supporting the phased development of additional materials. This work will involve curriculum experts in higher education, K-12 educators, NMPED, and other stakeholders already committed to and generating curricula that is defined as CLR.

The effort will begin with a statewide inventory of CLR curricula currently in development, enabling ongoing measurement of impact to identify effective practices before scaling.

Stage of Development and Implementation: This is in the prototype stage. Various CLR curricula have been created across the state and are in various stages of development, implementation, and measuring of impact. For example, the Acequia and Land Grant Education (ALGE) curriculum is in prototype phase but has been available online for public use since 2022. Other initiatives pending are in pilot phase and ready for PED approval. Another example is the HEAL Borderlands curriculum developed by the Borderlands and Ethnic Studies department at New Mexico State University that has been approved by PED <https://healborderlands.org/lessons/>. Teachers are being professionally trained in the methods and pedagogy for delivery.

Subgroups Effected: Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, Economically Disadvantaged Students, and Indigenous Students.

Capacity Building to Scale and Needed Systems Change: There is not sufficient ability to scale this work statewide without building the capacity within the New Mexico nonprofit sector and higher education. The budget provided below includes support for state based experts to support the growth of the initiative so that it can persist over time and across administrations. In addition, building local capacity is essential to ensure that the state can serve the communities with organizations that represent them.

As part of the needed systems change, this initiative would 1) identify other curricula being developed across the state, 2) begin to pilot these curricula in classrooms, 3) measure the impact, and then on a yearly basis, 4) scale up to include more classrooms, more schools, and appropriate professional development for educators and administrators to accompany these curricula. Support to align these curricula with NMPED standards and create new and appropriate standards is also part of this initiative. **Cost:** \$566 thousand in 2026, \$1.1 million 2027, and \$2.3 million in 2028.

Previous Legislative Requests: No previous requests for this initiative have been introduced. New legislation would prioritize building the long-term capacity of New Mexico's higher education institutions to sustain and scale this initiative statewide by aligning curriculum expertise and resources housed in higher education with the needs of the K-12 system. This includes investments in state-based expertise to ensure continuity across administrations and to strengthen connections between higher education and K-12 schools. In addition, the legislation would support systems change by identifying and piloting CLR curricula, measuring their impact, aligning them with NMPED standards, and expanding implementation annually with professional development for educators and administrators. Through this phased and capacity-driven approach, the initiative would create a foundation for equity-centered, culturally relevant education that can grow and adapt over time.

Related Resources:

Existing New Mexico K-12 Curricula that addresses Martinez/Yazzie

Below are four regional examples of curricula developed by New Mexicans for New Mexicans (and others eager to learn about New Mexico in land/place-based ways).

Curriculum websites:

- <https://cesdp.nmhu.edu/>
- <https://indianpueblo.org/indigenous-wisdom-curriculum-project/>
- <https://lasemillafoodcenter.org/ancestral-foods-lessons/>
- <https://healborderlands.org/>



Graduation Pathways and Individual Education Programs (IEPs)

Description: The opportunity for Special Education students in New Mexico to graduate on time have profoundly changed in the last year, given the new graduation requirements in HB 171 that were signed into law in 2024 and the subsequent rule change amendment in 6.29.1 NMAC, General Provisions. The modified pathway for students with disabilities has been removed through these policy changes and this initiative seeks to address the critical gap in transition services for young people with disabilities as they move from secondary to post-secondary education and employment. We propose a collaborative, community-based initiative that supports youth starting at age 14, empowering them to envision and achieve post-secondary success and competitive employment. The project will build networks of support, enhance educator and employer capacity, and provide training for higher education advisors. Activities include asset mapping, co-trainings, convenings, and community of practice (CoP) development with a focus on sustainable systems change.

Preliminary data from the prototype being used as the foundation for this initiative illustrate promising results with high levels of satisfaction achieved by both the interns and mentors. Interns described specific positive ways that the experience had impacted them which included gaining confidence in speaking to others, presenting, and knowing what to expect and how to succeed in future employment.

Stage of Development and Implementation: This is in the prototype stage. We estimate that this new initiative would begin with 36 students and three teachers in the prototype year (2026). In year two (2027) the initiative would serve 72 students and six teachers. By year three (2028) it would serve 144 students and 12 teachers. Simultaneous to the scaling effort, there will be an option for other schools to adopt these principles with support.

Subgroups Effected: Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, Economically Disadvantaged Students, and Indigenous Students.

Capacity Building to Scale and Needed Systems Change: There is not sufficient ability to scale this work statewide without building the capacity within the state nonprofit sector. The budget provided includes support for New Mexico based experts to support the growth of the initiative so that it can persist over time and across administrations. Additional schools and districts would simultaneously adopt the systems, tools, and resources developed with the advisory council and scaling program examples, in order to implement the Graduation Pathways and IEPs state-wide. These schools would receive technical assistance in a community of practice. In this way, local capacity can be built which ensures that the state can serve the communities with organizations that represent them. [Additional one-page resource.](#)

Cost: \$528,000 in 2026, \$916,000 in 2027, and \$1.6 million in 2028.

Previous Legislative Requests: This is a new initiative. New legislation would prioritize establishing and funding a statewide, community-based Graduation Pathways and IEP initiative that begins supporting students with disabilities at age 14, strengthens transition services to post-secondary education and competitive employment, builds networks of support among educators, employers, and higher education advisors, and develops sustainable systems through training, asset mapping, co-trainings, convenings, and communities of practice.

Re-engagement/Capstones/Paid Internships

Description: The goal of the plan is to scale new community-connected learning opportunities to graduate that are specified in HB171 (2024). Specifically, these options have proven to increase student engagement and result in higher attendance and graduation rates, such as Graduation Re-engagement Internship Program (GRIP), paid internships, and Capstone Projects. Given their success, there is significant pent up demand from districts and charter schools to increase their availability and funding. In addition, program evaluations of these programs align with the research findings of student sentiment by Future Focused Education highlighting wellbeing, mentorship and relevancy; educators also report higher levels of efficacy and job satisfaction.

The legislature recently increased the Secondary Factor and the At-Risk Factor in the SEG which would provide sufficient funding for needed school capacity. In the first year, the \$7.0 million outlined in the budget would be sufficient to place 2,000 students in 2026 who are in danger of not graduating. The funding would also cover the cost of a statewide intermediary to provide technical assistance and teacher training. This initiative would bring New Mexico on par with the national graduation rate average. In the following years, funding would address the desire of the majority of seniors that wish to graduate with a paid internship.

Stage of Development and Implementation: This program is in the scaling stage given that it already exists in 10 high schools across New Mexico through federal funding. [There have been two evaluations conducted and will be available for review in August 2025.](#)

Subgroups Effected: Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, Economically Disadvantaged Students, and Indigenous Students.

Capacity Building to Scale and Needed Systems Change: There is not sufficient ability to scale this work statewide without building the capacity within the New Mexico nonprofit sector. The budget provided includes support for state based experts to support the growth of the initiative so that it can persist over time and across administrations. In addition, building local capacity is essential to ensure that the state can serve the communities with organizations that represent them.

By increasing the number of students served and educators trained, the state would build the capacity to meet the needs of all high school students that choose to graduate with an internship or capstone project. Ultimately, this initiative has the potential to transform the school day for all students as it grows from focusing on those off track to graduation to the overall school community. It engages teachers in new pedagogical approaches and ways of assessment and young people in learning with purpose, mentorship, and care for their wellbeing which are what they are asking for. Link to the [GRIP External Evaluation](#).

Cost: \$6.6 million in 2026, \$13.1 million 2027, and \$25.8 million in 2028.

Previous Legislative Requests: \$1.0 million was allocated by the PED to prototype the GRIP program in 2025. The Innovation Zone initiative has also provided funding for paid internships.

Teacher Retention & Equity Microcredential

Description: A statewide microcredential program will be developed to strengthen the skills of educators and educational leaders in leadership, equity, and culturally responsive practices. The program will include two strands: (1) a Leadership Residency designed to strengthen school climate and foster authentic community-building, recognizing that these conditions are essential for retaining teachers and sustaining innovative, equity-driven practices through the integration of ethnographic training; and (2) a Professional Development In-Service strand that builds on the Pre-Service Embracing Equity, Teaching for Equity microcredential currently implemented across Central New Mexico Community College, San Juan College, University of New Mexico, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, and UNM Taos, ensuring that educators continue to deepen their equity literacy and carry forward culturally and linguistically responsive practices into their professional careers.

The Professional Development In-Service strand will identify and align competencies drawn from the Public Education Department's teacher domains, equity competencies, Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity social studies standards and national models such as the [Eight Competencies for Culturally Responsive Teaching](#) developed by New America in 2019. In addition to reviewing the existing competencies and standards and aligning the pathways - this is an opportunity to scale four programs in order to serve in-service teachers in a targeted effort to address an urgent need for teachers to be culturally and linguistically prepared.

Additionally, this effort is responsive to our Spanish speaking educators by translating the Teaching for Equity Microcredential into Spanish. We will use data gathered from Year 1 to refine programming/curricula and scale the number of leaders and school personnel engaging in these programs in Years 2 and 3.

Stage of Development and Implementation: This program is in the scaling stage given that it builds on the Pre-Service Embracing Equity, Teaching for Equity microcredential. In year one 80 leaders will be reached along with 400 school personnel. In year two 80 additional leaders will be trained along with 700 school personnel. In year three an additional 80 leaders will be trained along with 1,100 school personnel.

Subgroups Affected: Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, Economically Disadvantaged Students, and Indigenous Students.

Capacity Building to Scale and Needed Systems Change: The Leadership Microcredential strengthens school climate and community-building skills among educators and administrators, directly addressing teacher retention and creating the conditions for sustained implementation of innovative practices. By integrating ethnographic training, the program equips leaders with tools to understand and respond to the cultural and social dynamics of their school communities—an essential foundation for scaling any instructional or climate-related initiative.

The In-Service Microcredential extends these efforts across Early Childhood through K-12 by aligning Public Education Department teacher domains, equity competencies, and Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity standards into a unified framework. This alignment ensures consistent expectations statewide while allowing for local adaptation.

Cost: \$690,000 in 2026, \$860,500 in 2027, and \$1 million in 2028.

Previous Legislative Requests: No previous requests for this initiative have been introduced. New legislation would prioritize the creation and scaling of a statewide microcredential program designed to strengthen educator and leader capacity in leadership, equity, and culturally and linguistically responsive practices. This legislation would ensure that both pre-service and in-service educators have access to customized professional development and leadership residencies that build equitable school climates, foster authentic community engagement, and support teacher retention. It would focus on aligning competencies to state and national equity standards, expanding access to Spanish-speaking educators, and using data-driven approaches to continuously refine and scale the program, ultimately reaching hundreds of educators and leaders across New Mexico over the first three years.

School Based Behavioral Health Initiatives

Description: This school-based initiative strengthens mental health promotion in grades 6–12 while expanding pathways into the behavioral health and human services workforce. The approach supports schools in building trauma-responsive, culturally sustaining ecosystems by integrating strategies such as Teen Mental Health First Aid, suicide prevention education, and the development of wellness rooms. These efforts help both students and staff recognize, respond to, and reduce the impact of mental health and substance use challenges.

Alongside universal mental health promotion, the initiative creates structured, paid, competency-based internship opportunities for high school students. These internships offer young people early exposure to the field, mentorship, and transition support into college, professional certification, or employment.

By combining schoolwide support with targeted youth career development, this model offers a replicable strategy to advance educational equity, improve mental health outcomes, and build a more representative and sustainable behavioral health workforce across New Mexico.

Stage of Development and Implementation: This program is in the scaling stage as it exists in 10 high schools across New Mexico through federal funding. There have been two evaluations conducted and will be available for review in August 2025.

Locally created plans will be used to sustain current programs and internship opportunities and double the number of participants each year for the next three years: 10 schools and 50 interns in year one, 20 schools and 100 interns in year two, and 40 schools and 200 interns in year three.

Subgroups Affected: Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, Economically Disadvantaged Students, and Indigenous Students.

Capacity Building to Scale and Needed Systems Change: There is not sufficient ability to scale this work statewide without building the capacity within the New Mexico nonprofit sector. The budget includes support for state based experts to support the growth of the initiative so that it can persist over time and across administrations. In addition, building local capacity is essential to ensure that the state can serve the communities with organizations that represent them.

In light of this, this proposal is a three year approach toward scaling that will be needed in years beyond 2028. The goal is to develop “grow your own” career paths for young people that begin with a high school internship and result in Behavioral Health certifications and training that can be applied in their own communities to deal with the lack of services in so many communities across New Mexico.

Cost: \$1.9 million in 2026, \$3.7 million 2027, and \$7.3 million in 2028.

Previous Legislative Requests: The legislature appropriated \$1.0 million in 2025 to the Higher Education Department to fund expansion of programs that increase mental health training capacity (e.g. Teen Mental Health First Aid), including stipends for students. This funding was used to replace Federal cuts. The Public Education Department also received \$5.0 million, a portion will be used for similar purposes for 2026-28.

Related Resources:

Link to [Community Care Collective](#).

Uniform Baseline Behavior Training

Description: This initiative will provide uniform, substantive training to enable school staff statewide to support the behavioral needs of students whose behavior interferes with their learning and their success in school. Without effective behavior support, many students struggle to remain in school and to benefit academically and socially. In particular, students with disabilities and students of color suffer from the lack of appropriate and effective behavior supports. They are disproportionately subjected to punitive and exclusionary practices like suspension, expulsion, shortened day, informal removals, law enforcement intervention, involvement with the juvenile justice system, physical restraint, and seclusion—common symptoms of a system of inadequate behavior support.[1]

The initiative would require and fund Uniform Baseline Behavior Training for school staff, prioritizing those who are most commonly called upon to support and respond to student behavior. The proposed training is a well-regarded, self-paced 40-hour training provided at the cost of \$99 per trainee by the national publisher Relias, [Relias 40 Hour Training](#).

This is training used for certification of Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs)—behavior analysis paraprofessionals who work under the supervision of Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) to understand and support behavior needs.

The proposal also includes funding for dedicated full-time staff with behavior expertise within NMPED's Office of Special Education to support implementation, as well as funding for consultation, modeling, and related supports needed for successful implementation. It would provide funding for at least one staff at each school to be fully certified as a registered behavior technician (RBT). Finally, it would provide evaluation at the conclusion of each year of the initiative.

Stage of Development and Implementation: This proposal is in the prototype stage and is intended to be a recurring permanent source of funding for the initiative. The first three years of the initiative are as follows:

Year 1: In this pilot year, training will be provided to ten (10) schools, covering (at a minimum) five regions of the state (Central, Northwest, Northeast, Southeast, and Southwest). One (1) staff at each school will be able to become fully certified as a RBT, and nine (9) staff at each school would receive the training, as follows: two (2) school administrators, two (2) staff who are either members of the Crisis Team or security staff, two (2) special education teachers or educational assistants, two (2) regular education teachers, and one (1) additional staff as needed.

Year 2: Training will be provided to fifty (50) additional geographically diverse schools, distinct from Year 1. One (1) staff at each school will be able to become fully certified as a RBT, and nine (9) staff at each school would receive the training, identical to Year 1.

Year 3: Training will be provided to one hundred (100) additional geographically diverse schools, distinct from Years 1 and 2. One (1) staff at each school will be able to become fully certified as a RBT, and nine (9) staff at each school would receive the training, identical to Years 1 and 2.

Subgroups Affected: Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, Economically Disadvantaged Students, and Indigenous Students.

Capacity Building to Scale and Needed Systems Change:

There is not sufficient ability to scale this work statewide without building the capacity within the New Mexico nonprofit sector and the NMPED. The budget includes support for state based experts and the NMPED to support the growth of the initiative so that it can persist over time and across administrations. In addition, building local capacity is essential to ensure that the state can serve the communities with organizations that represent them. After the three year period described above and based on the evaluation results, scaling will continue statewide along with adjustments to ensure continuous improvements.

Cost: \$335,000 in year one, 1.1 million in year two, and 1.4 million in year three. The per person cost of Relias RBT Training (Version 3.0) is \$99. The per person application and examination cost is \$95 plus any applicable taxes.

Previous Legislative Requests: There has not been a specific bill introduced to support the initiative. Previous efforts have been made to incorporate training requirements for meeting students' behavior needs (including positive behavior interventions and supports and de-escalation), most recently in HB260 (Allowable Responses to Student Behavior).

Related Resources[1]:

- **National Disability Rights Network. (January 2022).** Out from the Shadows: Informal Removal of Children with Disabilities from Public Schools, <https://www.ndrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Out-from-The-Shadows-1.pdf>
- **NM Legislative Education Study Committee. (July 2024).** Building Safer Schools: Policy Measures and Considerations on Restraint and Seclusion, <https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/ALESC%20072424%20Item%203%20.1%20-%20Restraint%20and%20Seclusion%20LESC%20Brief.pdf>
- **NM Developmental Disabilities Council. (July 2024).** Senate Memorial 68 Restraint and Seclusion in NM Public Schools Working Group Report, <https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/ALESC%20072424%20Item%203%20.2%20-%20Restraint%20and%20Seclusion%20Working%20Group%20Report%20Appendix%201.pdf>
- **U.S. Department of Education. (July 2022).** Questions and Answers: Addressing the Needs of Students with Disabilities and IDEA's Discipline Provisions, <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/qa-addressing-the-needs-of-children-with-disabilities-and-idea-discipline-provisions.pdf>
- **U.S. Government Accountability Office. (March 2018).** Discipline Disparities for Black Students, Boys, and Students with Disabilities, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-18-258>