

League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces
Education Study Committee

Presentation About the Education of Prospective Teachers

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The presentation began with a discussion about educating college students to become K-12 teachers. The students graduate with a Bachelor of Science (BS) in education and are licensed by the State of New Mexico according to requirements set by the NM Legislature. Also, there is an alternate licensing option whereby holding a degree in another field allows one to enter a one-year program in education to achieve alternate licensure. The Education Management and Development Department of the College of Education prepares principals and other administrators about how to run schools.

The curriculum is divided into three categories:

- Birth through 3rd grade: 0-8 years
- Elementary – 4th through 8th Grades
- Secondary – 9th-12th Grades

The pedagogy curriculum focuses on techniques for teaching, developing lesson plans, specific training on how to teach, and student teaching. The curriculum is further divided into specialty areas such as math, social studies, language, science, and technology. Additionally, there are endorsements that include bilingual (TESOL), reading, technology, math, and science. Throughout the program, the students are observed by a faculty advisor who ensures that progress is made in meeting the required curriculum and endorsements. Also, counseling and adjustments occur to ensure that only students who are expected to succeed as teacher remain in the program. Student teaching occurs in the last semesters of the curriculum. Student-teachers are observed during the first semester of their student practicum and actually teach during the second semester during their student teaching. The student is observed in the classroom environment by the faculty advisor on at least three or more occasions. To demonstrate their competence, skills and professionalism, a portfolio is prepared by the student teacher and used by the faculty advisor in the final assessment of the student teacher.

Students who wish to make a career of teaching in New Mexico pass through a three-tier performance system.

- Level 1 (1-3 years): Provides a teacher with provisional licensing until at year 3 the license becomes permanent. During this period, the new teacher is evaluated and, in turn, she/he evaluates whether or not to stay in the teaching profession. It is at this level that teachers may be asked to leave if the evaluators feel that the individual is just not cut out to be a teacher.

- Level 2 (Year 4 to present): The teacher receives salary increases and puts together a portfolio that demonstrates skills, competence, and professionalism. Permanent licensure is achieved. Teachers who prefer the classroom may remain at this level permanently.
- Level 3: Teacher must teach 6 years and achieve a Master's Degree. Teachers at this level can become principals or go into education administration.

The three-tier system that demonstrates personal growth of the teacher meets the requirement of No Child Left Behind. Portfolios assembled by the teachers demonstrate their personal growth.

Research studies have shown that those teachers completing a degree in education remain longer in teaching than those who achieve alternate licensing. Individuals who have achieved a degree in another major often leave to work in the field of their original major because of salary considerations and stress related to teaching.

The NMSU College of Education is accredited by the National Council of Accredited Teacher Education (NCATE), an independent organizations whose accreditation recognizes that colleges of education are meeting standards for educating teachers for the classroom.

The U.S. Constitution gives responsibility for the education system to the states. New Mexico State Legislature enacts laws regulating the establishment, governance and operation of schools, including alternative schooling such as home schooling or charter schools. The Legislature adopts laws guiding the operation of a state public education department and local school districts and boards. It establishes curriculum and graduation requirements and sets forth conditions for the employment and termination of school personnel. It provides almost all of the funding for school operations through a funding formula. Funding for K-12 education amounts to more than 40 per cent of the total budget. Since education claims such a large portion of the state budget, the important question to ask is *NOT how much money is spent on education BUT how the funding for education should be spent.*

In No Child Left Behind (NCLB), certain mandates were required that actually were positive outcomes for education:

- All teachers are required to be licensed.
- Poor teachers could be eliminated.
- Established the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) that forced school districts to assess themselves.
- Did achieve statistics on how children are doing.

It does, however, eliminate creativity in the classroom, and moves districts to teach to the test at the expense of other subjects and teaching other critical skills.

Charter Schools: Las Cruces has three charter schools:

1. Alma d'Arte Charter High School (art based): 402 W. Court, LC, 541-0145. See League's web site, www.lwvglc.org for paper on Alma d'Arte and a good explanation of establishing a charter school. Authorization is through NM State.

2. Las Montanas High School (technology based): 201 Lohman Ave., LC, 636-2100. Authorization is through the Las Cruces School District.
3. Academia Dolores Huerta Middle School (Spanish and English curriculum): 1450 N. Main, LC, 526-2984. Authorization is through the Las Cruces School District.

Charter Schools are opportunities for good students but are not serving the students who need help the most (lower socio economic) group, who are left to be taught in the public schools. Because the charters are funded by the state (public funding) they have to follow the same rules as public schools. They can be a little more creative and independent. They often lack administrative experience, skills for policy development, and familiarity with liability.

General Comment:

1. There is a need for more connection between NMSU's College of Education and the LCPS School Board.
2. More dialogue with citizens and organizations in the community would create a better understanding of what is happening in the school district when school reform and programs like No Child Left Behind are mandated.
3. Teachers have to be recognized and respected for the professionals that they are. Paying professional salaries may help in achieving these goals.
4. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and President Obama's program, Race to the Top, did not involve teachers during their creation and development. Professors Reyes and Rodriguez felt that these programs would have been much better programs if teachers were involved in their development.