

LWVNM EDUCATION POSITION UPDATE

Italicized items are in the current position. Proposed changes are not italicized.

(Adopted 1987; revised 1995, 2009, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2021)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico believes that education is the foundation for a strong and viable democracy. As a multicultural and multilingual state, New Mexico must incorporate the principle of educational equity in its practices and policies to ensure the highest level of academic achievement for all students. The public education system should impart to students an understanding of the nature of democracy, the ability to think critically, and the skills necessary to function successfully in a complex society.

LWVNM believes that every student should have access to a high-quality, equitable publicly funded education regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, family income, or geographical location. Each student should be respected as an individual in a learning environment that values diverse cultures.

The League supports public schools as the primary institutions for educating students and opposes the presence of private, for-profit companies in the governance, management, and provision of public education. LWVNM believes that an education commission should be responsible for recommending the appointment of the head of the Public Education Department and advising on education policy, regulations, and finances. The League believes in accountability, transparency, and equity in the use of public funds for education.

Essential elements for a high-quality, equitable education system include challenging academic content, multicultural and multilingual education, culturally and linguistically responsive practices, college and career preparation; knowledgeable and skillful educators supplied with ongoing relevant professional development options including learning technologies; integrated academic and support strategies including physical, social, and mental health, for all students based on data; access to early childhood education and care opportunities; adequate funding and resources distributed effectively and equitably.

1. Teachers, Administrators, and Staff:

New Mexico needs to implement measures to improve the preparation, recruitment, professional development, and retention of quality educators with in-depth knowledge in core academic subjects and instructional strategies. The educational workforce should reflect the diversity of New Mexico's students, and the state should provide financial support to prospective educators. Teacher education programs must equip teachers, administrators, and staff to succeed in providing high quality education in a fair and impartial manner. Educators should learn about the cultural backgrounds of their students and provide content relevant to their experiences. Educators should be able to identify potentially prejudicial or biased material and be alert to insensitive representations of cultural groups. Educators should be trained to teach English as a second language.

Meaningful ongoing professional development in technological, multicultural, social-emotional learning is needed to help teachers support their students both in classrooms and with online learning. Schools should provide high-quality mentoring for beginning teachers and administrators as well as teaming opportunities for teachers. Compensation should be adequate to attract and retain well-qualified teachers, support personnel, and administrators.

2. ***Early Childhood Education:***

- 2.1. *Fund sufficiently a broad base of social service agencies, providers, and schools to foster the development of children from birth to age five and prepare them for success in school and life.*
- 2.2. *Provide quality early childhood care providers and educators with culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate programming and access to resources through cross-agency partnerships.*
- 2.3. *Emphasize holistic development of preschoolers through programming that supports social, emotional, cognitive, and physical learning.*
- 2.4. *Provide programs that encourage increased family involvement in the education of their children.*

3. ***K-12 Education:***

- 3.1. *Use the Common Core State Standards to provide a framework for knowledge and the academic skills that students are expected to master, with flexibility to determine how the standards are learned and assessed.*
- 3.2. *Develop to each student's highest potential the knowledge and skills needed for success along with a broad understanding and appreciation of history and prospects for the future.*
- 3.3. *Cultivate each student's capacity to solve problems and make decisions.*
- 3.4. *Provide opportunities for all students to develop their aesthetic awareness and creative abilities.*
- 3.5. *Foster an awareness of the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of participation in a democratic society.*
- 3.6. *Foster an understanding of basic economic principles and the need to manage resources for the benefit of both present and future generations.*
- 3.7. *Provide the tools to make wise college and career choices and to understand the importance of each individual's work in the local, national, and world economies.*
- 3.8. *Promote practices that lead to physical, mental, and emotional well-being.*
- 3.9. *Enhance the sense of community within the school, as a microcosm of the larger society, through standards of conduct that reflect a concern for the opinions, values, aspirations, and well-being of all.*
- 3.10. *Develop the critical thinking and problem-solving skills of students through experiential learning, project-based learning, and through the use of technology.*
- 3.11. *Maintain and use health and social service teams in the schools to identify and work with students and their parents or caregivers, with referrals to appropriate community agencies when necessary.*

4. Promoting Continuous Improvement in Learning:

- 4.1 Focus student evaluation on student academic progress rather than rigid standards of proficiency.*
- 4.2 Use student testing to assist teachers in providing effective and timely strategies for student academic achievement.*
- 4.3 Implement measures to improve the preparation, recruitment, professional development, and retention of quality educators with in-depth knowledge in core academic subjects and instructional strategies.*
- 4.4 Follow due process procedures when terminating teachers and principals who do not meet minimum standards.*
- 4.5 Base assessment of school and teacher performance on overall quality of the education provided to the students and improvements in student academic growth as measured by multiple methods, including professional observations.*

5. Postsecondary Education:

The League believes that all qualified students should have the opportunity to acquire a postsecondary education and that successful participation should be aided by a variety of resources. Postsecondary education includes public career-technical, community college, undergraduate, and graduate institutions. Preschool, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education should be viewed as a continuum leading to lifelong learning.

Effective programs

- 5.1 Prepare students for increasingly difficult academic work and explain graduation standards and expectations.*
- 5.2 Provide information to middle school and high school students and families regarding academic and financial issues related to attending postsecondary education institutions, including the variety of options and dual credit.*
- 5.3 Provide state-funded need-based financial aid to enable all qualified students to attain a postsecondary education.*
- 5.4 Provide state-funded merit-based scholarships to attract and retain high quality students from New Mexico.*
- 5.5 Facilitate positive engagement in learning, using a variety of resources to support students socially and emotionally, and improve academic performance.*

6. Community Involvement:

- 6.1 Collaborate with all sectors of the community to improve public education at all levels.*
- 6.2 Seek business cooperation in offering work schedules that support student attendance at school.*
- 6.3 Ask businesses and community organizations to provide support, and find work or service opportunities for students, to create incentives to encourage students to develop career skills and graduate from high school.*

6.4 Implement programs that increase involvement of families in the education of students at all grade levels.

6.5 Utilize the community schools model as much as possible.

7. Charter Schools:

(Adopted 2016)

Charter schools are discretionary programs intended to fill unmet needs and/or to test innovative instructional strategies to produce quality educational outcomes. Before authorizing or reauthorizing charter schools, policy makers must ensure that adequate funds are available for traditional public schools and define how charter schools fit unmet needs. Appropriate instructional and support services must be provided in all public schools to meet the diverse needs of individual students.

For the sake of assuring accountability and transparency and minimizing the fiscal impact of charter schools, LWVNM recommends the following:

- 7.1. Require charter school finances be available for public scrutiny and budget processes be similar to those of school districts, which provide opportunities for public input into decision-making.*
- 7.2. Require charter school governing council members to adhere to standards and best practices as delineated by the NM School Boards Association.*
- 7.3. Minimize the amount allocated to for-profit management and business operations with oversight provided by state-approved auditors.*
- 7.4. Make funding equitable so as not to advantage charter schools over traditional public schools.*
- 7.5. Fund virtual charter schools less per student since schools do not require brick and mortar facilities.*
- 7.6. Implement an effective performance-based accountability system for charter schools with benchmarks for increased proficiency, academic growth, and college/career readiness standards to ensure that charter schools demonstrate positive student outcomes.*
- 7.7. Put charter schools that do not meet the established benchmarks on time-limited improvement plans and do not allow them to increase enrollment or continue unless they have met the benchmarks.*
- 7.8. Disseminate effective charter school innovations to improve traditional public schools.*

8. Funding for Public Education:

(Adopted 1973; revised 1983, 1993, 2002, 2007, 2015)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports use of a financial distribution formula that reflects differences in student needs, assets, and interests; teacher experiences and qualifications; the number of schools and students in a district; level of education; capital outlay; and transportation requirements.

The New Mexico State Equalization Guarantee funding formula should be used to achieve equity and to provide fair funding for every student based on need, regardless of location. There should be periodic review and modifications to assure that the formula is faithful to its original intent.

Funding should provide for high quality education for all students and be consistently and fairly applied across the state.

Programs that foster children's development from birth to age 5 for success in kindergarten and beyond should be adequately funded.

Online, hybrid, and remote instruction should address the same elements as high-quality in-person schooling. Additional funding is needed for internet services, educator training, and student/family support with distance learning.

Career-technical programs and for magnet schools should receive supplemental funding.

The state should prioritize programs that support students in transitioning from high school to postsecondary education, careers, and work. Collaborative programs between higher education and high schools, including dual credit, should be adequately funded.

Scholarships for higher education are essential to support low-income students and to incentivize students' completion of degrees and certificates.

Local school districts should control the funds distributed to them.

All state and federal mandates should be accompanied by adequate funding, so as not to place an undue burden on public schools.

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