New Mexico School Superintendents Association
New Mexico Coalition of Educational Leaders
FY 27 Legislative Platform

💰 Issue 1: Robust Funding, Protections & School Safety

- **Equitable Programming:** Secure recurring funds for continued **bilingual programming** and targeted **math and literacy grants**, including funds to adequately support staff professional development, to close the achievement gap.
- **Operational Essentials:** Ensure full funding for **transportation needs**, specifically adjusting for fluctuating fuel costs, increase in district costs, rural distance requirements and activity transportation costs.
- **Qualitative Student Outcome Data:** Consistent funding to support the continuous analytical scope using Lexile/Quantile data representing student outcomes, highlighted by the Evress Analytics Whitepaper study.
- **Universal Meals:** Ensure full funding for the **healthy universal meal program** to prevent the need for additional district operational money to supplement a state provided program.
- **Instructional Materials:** Ensure full funding for **instructional materials**, recognizing that stagnant funding does not acknowledge inflationary costs, administrative rule or HQIM professional development requirements. Thus, district operational funding is required to supplement costs.
- **Comprehensive School Safety:** Allocate additional dedicated funds for **infrastructure hardening** (secure entryways), the hiring of **School Security Officers (SROs)**, and allowing districts to use certified **armed guards** in place of SRO's due to issues or lack thereof.
- **Fiscal Autonomy:** Protect **district cash balances** from state "sweeps," allowing schools to maintain such funds for local emergencies and multi-year future project planning.

  Key Reasons for Maintaining Cash Balances

  - **Cash Flow Management:** School district revenue (state and local) is often cyclical, while expenditures (salaries, supplies) are consistent throughout the year. Cash balances act as a buffer, particularly during the summer months when tax revenue is low.
  - **Emergency Reserves:** Reserves provide a safety net for unforeseen costs or revenue shortfalls without requiring immediate, drastic cuts to academic programs or staffing.
  - **Financial Stability & Credit Ratings:** A strong, healthy, or "adequate" balance—often recommended to be 20%–25% of annual expenditures—improves credit ratings, which reduces interest costs on debt for long-term projects.
  - **Operational Contingencies:** They allow districts to cover immediate needs, such as unexpected increases in special education costs or enrollment spikes. Generally, these balances are crucial for ensuring the continuity of education and fiscal responsibility, preventing districts from falling into financial distress.

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🎓 Issue 2: Empowering Local Innovation via Educational Programming, including Virtual Programs

- **Retain District Flexibility:** Protect the right of local school districts to design and manage their own educational programs rather than being forced into centralized or outsourced state models.
- **Quality Instruction Standards:** Implement rigorous state-approved quality metrics for virtual learning that prioritize student engagement, credentialed local teaching staff, and interactive multimedia curricula.
- **Instructional Delivery:** Grant districts the autonomy to use virtual tools for "inclement weather" days or elective courses that are otherwise unavailable, ensuring learning never stops.

🏛 Issue 3: Transition to a Stable State Board of Education

- **Consistent Leadership:** Legislate a shift from an **appointed Education Secretary** to a **State Board of Education** model to prevent the "revolving door" of leadership often seen with executive appointments.
- **Non-Partisan Governance:** Ensure the board is composed of staggered-term members to maintain institutional knowledge and insulate educational policy from shifting political winds.
- **Accountability:** Establish the Board as the primary body for setting long-term curriculum standards, educational policy and teacher certification, providing a clear and stable vision for the state's schools.