

PRESS RELEASE

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New Mexico
Freedoms Alliance

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NM Teachers Urge to NM Education Secretary Dr Arsenio Romero to Make Improvements for Student Success

STATEWIDE, NM – On January 4, 2024, a group of over 200 NM teachers and school personnel sent an Open Letter to NM Education Secretary Dr Arsenio Romero. In this letter, teachers statewide expressed concern about the persistently low academic achievement of New Mexico’s students. The teachers provided a list of 8 ways in which the NM Public Education Department (PED) can help ensure student success.

NM teachers are urging the PED to reduce class sizes in order to allow for more individual attention to be given to students. The teachers are also asking the PED to stop the practice of social promotion, wherein students are advanced to the next grade every year, regardless of whether they are academically ready to move to the next grade. According to the teachers,

“Students need high expectations, not handouts. We need to be able to hold back students who are not yet ready to move to the next grade. When we cannot do this, education for all students suffers.

“We have to spend so much time trying to help some students catch up that many other students are neglected. The students who are at the top of the class are largely left on their own instead of being challenged to reach their full potential. Meanwhile, the students who come into our classes already struggling, fall further and further behind because they just needed an extra year to catch up.”

Teachers are also concerned about behavior problems and violence in NM schools, urging that the PED provide better training as well as significant consequences for students.

“Besides acting out in class, some students are violent to the point of threatening and assaulting teachers, beating up other students, throwing chairs in classrooms, etc. Substance abuse issues are also widespread. Students who go to school to learn have their education interrupted incessantly. Student behavior problems are also causing teacher burnout and are a huge reason why many teachers are leaving the education profession. Teachers’ hands are tied on imposing any real consequences for these behaviors...”

According to a high school teacher in Albuquerque NM, violence in schools is a huge problem.

“We, the teachers, are not safe at school. Neither are the students. Students who threaten and assault teachers are allowed to remain and are not expelled from school. This is done to keep the kids in school and off the streets, but it comes at the expense of teacher and student safety.

“Teachers and students are then missing out on quality education because of the extra classroom management time and lower behavior standards. We need the schools and the PED to have our backs, taking action to protect us from violence at school.”

Kim Perea, an elementary school teacher in Deming NM, says students have been harmed by the state’s COVID policies.

“The PED needs to take ownership for the devastating effects of NM’s COVID policies for schools. Accountability is a two-way street. The lengthy school closures, mask mandates, and vaccine mandates left many students struggling to catch up and created an onerous work environment for the teachers.”

The Open Letter to the PED was sent on behalf of over 200 NM teachers and school personnel by Sarah Smith from the New Mexico Freedoms Alliance. According to Sarah Smith,

“Many teachers feel like they can’t speak out publicly about these issues, yet they want what is best for New Mexico’s students and see a great need for change. We hope that the NM PED will listen to the teachers, who are the frontline workers in NM’s schools.”

The Open Letter to the PED can be read in its entirety here: <https://www.nmfa.us/ped-letter>