

Strengthening the Teaching Profession in New Mexico through Professional Learning

2026



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EdRD gratefully acknowledges the many individuals who contributed to the creation of this report. Kersti Tyson developed the vision, engaged stakeholders, and skillfully managed the project. Michael Dabrieo and Gwen Perea Warniment offered thoughtful guidance and feedback throughout the process. Hope Morales supported educator recruitment for surveys and focus groups. Dawn Bilbrey and Andrea Thomas helped facilitate teacher focus groups and contributed to instrument design and analysis of educator perspectives. From the Thornburg Foundation, Michael Weinberg helped establish the initial vision for the study, and Tim Bedeaux provided thoughtful feedback on the final report.

We are especially grateful to our advisory group—Alan Brauer, Kyle Gentile, Melissa Sandoval, and Lashawna Tso—for their guidance on study design, survey and interview protocols, and feedback on early analyses and drafts. Their insights were instrumental in helping us capture differences across contexts such as charter, tribal, and rural schools.

We deeply appreciate all the educators, leaders, and community members who shared materials, completed surveys, and participated in interviews and focus groups. Their thoughtful input provided critical insights into their diverse experiences and needs across New Mexico.

Finally, we thank Stephanie Montoya for her graphic design, copy editing, and layout contributions, which enhanced the accessibility and presentation of this report.

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September 2025

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March 2026

We would like to thank the following reviewers for their thoughtful feedback and critiques, especially as we worked to refine the recommendations:

Tim Bedeaux, Thornburg Foundation

Dawn Bilbrey, NM Teach Plus

Jessica Castro, NM Teach Plus

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Michael Dabrieo, LANL Foundation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Teaching is among the most complex and consequential professions, requiring educators to meet diverse students' academic, social, and emotional needs while adapting to evolving standards, instructional practices, and community expectations. New Mexico's teachers recognize this complexity and are dedicated to their students, schools, communities and profession. Like other highly skilled professionals, teachers need continual opportunities to expand their expertise and maintain standards of practice, making high-quality professional learning essential—not optional—for student success. Research shows that meaningful, sustained professional learning not only strengthens instructional practice and student outcomes but also builds professional communities that reduce isolation, bolster morale, and improve retention. New Mexico's teachers recognize the importance of professional learning for deepening their professional practice and want more access to differentiated and relevant job-embedded professional learning opportunities.

Too often professional learning falls short, relying on one-time workshops that lack depth or relevance. The urgency of addressing this gap is particularly acute in New Mexico, with persistent teacher shortages, high turnover, and ongoing challenges in rural and underserved communities. New Mexico's teachers themselves are calling for change. They demand a more strategic, systemic approach. A statewide system for implementing high-quality professional learning is essential to equipping New Mexico's teachers with the skills to integrate culturally and linguistically sustaining practices with rigorous instructional approaches aligned to state and national standards of practice, which are necessary for meeting the Martinez/Yazzie lawsuit mandate to provide Native American, English Learner, low-income, and special education students with the resources and instruction they need to succeed.

Purpose and Methodology

This report, *Strengthening the Teaching Profession in New Mexico through Professional Learning*, presents findings from a statewide landscape analysis conducted by Education Research and Development (EdRD) with support from the LANL Foundation and the Thornburg Foundation. The goals were to: 1) understand the current state of professional learning in New Mexico; and 2) offer policy recommendations for improving statewide systems and programs that support high-quality professional learning.

The mixed-methods study examined the current state of professional learning in New Mexico by reviewing national and state research, analyzing existing policies and programs, and gathering perspectives from over 2,000 educators through surveys and focus groups. Data sources included collective bargaining agreements, state policies, Title II-A funding reviews, and comparative analyses of other states' approaches to professional learning.

Key Findings

Literature Review

- Professional learning can improve teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.
- High-quality professional learning is sustained, job-embedded, collaborative, and aligned to teacher and student needs.
- States can play a pivotal role in strengthening professional learning by setting policy frameworks and standards, funding and vetting providers, linking professional learning to licensure, collecting data, and building leadership and technical assistance systems that ensure equitable, high-quality opportunities for all educators.

Policy and Program Analysis

New Mexico has laid foundational policies to support professional learning, such as:

- Triennial evaluation requirements for professional learning programs
- Broad use of Title II-A funds by districts
- A vetted professional learning marketplace

Yet important challenges remain, including:

- Weak implementation of evaluation requirements and professional learning standards
- Limited attention to priority topics
- Predominance of short-term training over sustained, job-embedded learning
- Gaps in licensure linkage and collective bargaining support

Educator Perspectives

- Educators view professional learning as essential but uneven in quality, access, relevance, and effectiveness. While most believe professional learning improves instruction and students' opportunities to learn, more than 40% described their current experiences as ineffective, inconsistent, or a poor use of time.

- Teachers prefer professional learning that is collaborative, job-embedded, and context-specific. The most valued approaches include professional learning communities (PLCs), peer observations, co-planning, and other learning experiences tailored to educators' content areas, instructional roles, and student populations.
- Professional learning is generally aligned with several statewide priorities but significant content gaps remain. Many educators reported access to professional learning in social-emotional learning (SEL), culturally responsive teaching (CRT), and structured literacy, while substantially fewer had opportunities to strengthen instruction in mathematics, science/STEM, social studies, and trauma-informed practices.
- Professional learning needs differ across educators' roles, career stages, school contexts, and communities. For example, novice teachers seek support with classroom management while veteran teachers desire leadership skills; needs vary depending on whether teachers are in rural, urban, charter, or traditional schools.

Conclusions

New Mexico has important building blocks in place, including a professional learning framework, broad district participation in Title II-A funded professional learning, promising models such as the High-Quality professional learning Marketplace, and dedicated professionals. However, the professional learning system remains fragmented and misaligned with educator needs. The imbalance between short-term trainings and more effective, sustained professional learning limits impact. Further, professional learning policies and funding do not sufficiently prioritize state goals or the populations named in the Martinez/Yazzie ruling.

Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations are organized into two complementary categories: (1) building the infrastructure for a coherent statewide professional learning system and (2) increasing the capacity of educators and institutions to deliver high-quality professional learning. Together, these recommendations are designed to improve teachers' access to relevant, job-embedded learning throughout their careers while strengthening alignment across teacher and leader preparation, professional learning, and statewide supports.

Develop New Mexico's Professional Learning Infrastructure	Increase Educators' Access to Relevant High Quality Professional Learning
Infrastructure Recommendation 1: Focus a bureau at PED on Professional Learning.	Access Recommendation 1: Invest in Strategic Staffing Models that Provide Structures and a Framework for Teacher Collaboration, Ongoing Job-Embedded Professional Learning and Continuous Improvement Processes.
Infrastructure Recommendation 2: Build Statewide Capacity, Coordination and Oversight for Regional and District Professional Learning by Funding a Professional Learning Specialist in each REC.	Access Recommendation 2: Grow New Mexico's Cadre of Teacher Leaders. Increase the Number of Coaches and Teacher Leaders in Schools Who Have Content and Pedagogical Expertise.
Infrastructure Recommendation 3: Require Systemic Meaningful Professional Learning for Teacher License Renewal and Advancement.	Access Recommendation 3: Strengthen the Capacity of School & District Leaders to Lead High-Quality Professional Learning Systems
Infrastructure Recommendation 4: Embed Essential Skills into Teacher Preparation and Induction Programs Aligned to State and District Priorities.	

Implications

Strategic investment in professional learning is essential for meeting New Mexico's constitutional obligations to provide a sufficient education for all students and for supporting a strong, stable, and culturally responsive educator workforce. By shifting toward sustained, job-embedded, and equity-focused professional learning, the state can strengthen the teaching profession, improve student outcomes, improve teacher retention, and advance educational justice for all learners.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



Teaching is one of the most complex and consequential professions in our society. Every day, educators are tasked with meeting the differentiated academic, social, and emotional needs of their diverse students while adapting to evolving standards, new instructional practices, and shifting community and industry expectations. Like doctors, engineers, or other highly skilled professionals, teachers require continual opportunities to strengthen and expand their expertise in order to maintain state and national standards of practice. High-quality professional learning is therefore not a luxury, but a necessity for ensuring that educators are prepared to help all students thrive.

Research consistently demonstrates that when teachers engage in meaningful, sustained professional learning, the impact on student outcomes can be profound. Well-designed professional learning equips teachers with tools to deepen their content knowledge, refine instructional practices, and foster equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive classrooms. A seminal study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education found that well-designed professional learning programs were associated with significant gains in student achievement—equivalent to about a 21 percentile point increase.¹

It also builds professional communities that reduce teacher isolation, strengthen morale, and improve retention. For example, a Learning Policy Institute study found that schools offering collaborative, job-embedded professional learning reported higher teacher satisfaction and lower turnover, particularly in high-poverty schools.² Another study by Kraft & Papay found that teachers in supportive professional learning environments are 1.5 times more likely to remain beyond five years compared to those in low-support environments.³ In short, investing in professional learning is one of the most effective levers policymakers and education leaders can pull to advance student success, increase teacher retention, and strengthen the overall education system.

Despite its potential, professional learning often falls short of its promise.⁴ Too frequently, it relies on short-term, lecture-based formats that research has shown to be ineffective.⁵ Effective professional learning should instead: be content-rich, actively engage participants, foster collaboration, model effective practices, include coaching and expert support, provide opportunities for feedback and reflection, and be sustained over time.⁶ This research points to the need for professional learning policies that not only expand access but also ensure alignment with these evidence-based practices. On-going learning is integral to professional growth for educators, indeed for every profession. Professional learning policies can help to create a system that ensures educators are ready and responsive for learners' evolving needs.

The Impact of High-Quality Professional Learning on Teachers and Students

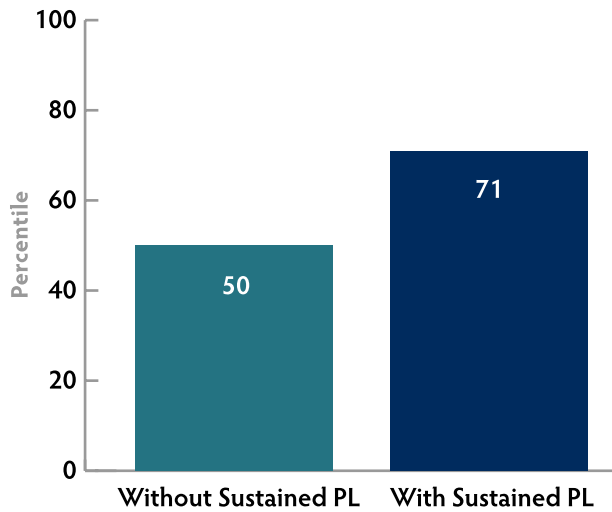


Figure 1: Student Achievement" (Percentile)

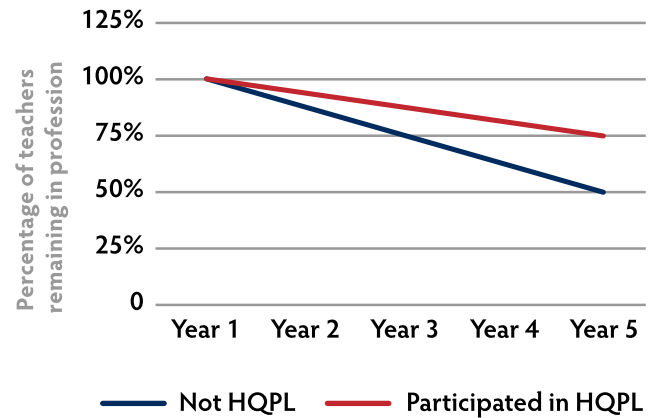


Figure 2: Likelihood of Teacher Retention.

The urgency of investing in professional learning is especially acute in New Mexico today. The state is grappling with persistent teacher shortages, low student achievement rates, higher rates of turnover, and the ongoing challenge of recruiting and retaining educators in rural and underserved communities. At the same time, the Martinez/Yazzie lawsuit underscored the state's constitutional obligation to provide Native American, English Learner, low-income, and special education students with resources and instruction they need to succeed and demonstrate proficiency. Meeting this mandate requires not only expanding the educator workforce, but also equipping teachers with the knowledge, skills, and support to implement inclusive culturally and linguistically sustaining practices and more rigorous instructional approaches. Strategic investment in high-quality professional learning is therefore both a critical response to immediate workforce pressures and an essential step toward long-term educational equity in New Mexico.

The lack of a strategic, sustained focus on high-quality professional learning in New Mexico is particularly concerning given the support educators need to be able to implement culturally and linguistically sustaining practices, social-emotional learning strategies, and instructional approaches aligned with more rigorous state and national standards—such as inquiry-based learning and career connected learning. These shifts are essential to achieving the mandates of the Martinez/Yazzie ruling and providing a sufficient education for New Mexico's students.

Other states have invested state funding and adopted strategies to create systems for strengthening educator professional learning, such as developing structured pathways and linking participation to license renewal. However, the most effective strategies for New Mexico must be informed by its unique context, strengths, and challenges.

To that end, the LANL Foundation and the Thornburg Foundation partnered with Education Research and Development (EdRD) to conduct a statewide landscape analysis. This study examines the current state of professional learning available to educators in New Mexico, including what opportunities exist, how they are experienced and perceived by educators, how participation is incentivized, and how they are funded. It also explores potential policy levers, including licensure requirements, teacher contracts, and opportunities to better coordinate local, state, and federal funding.

Martinez/Yazzie v. State of New Mexico Court Ruling

On July 20, 2018, Judge Sara Singleton ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in the consolidated Martinez and Yazzie lawsuits. The lawsuit found the state of New Mexico had failed to meet its constitutional obligation to provide an adequate, sufficient education to four student groups: socioeconomically disadvantaged children, English learners, Native American students, and children with disabilities. More specifically,

- *"The state had failed to provide at-risk students with programs and services necessary to make them college- or career-ready;*
- *The funding provided has not been sufficient for all school districts to provide the programs and services required by the New Mexico Constitution; and*
- *The Public Education Department (PED) has failed to meet its supervisory and audit functions to assure school districts are spending money provided to them to most efficiently achieve the needs of providing at-risk students with the programs and services needed for them to obtain an adequate education."*⁷

The ruling ordered the state to increase funding, explicitly stating that redistributing the current appropriations would be insufficient. In May 2022, the New Mexico PED released a discussion draft of an action plan to address the Martinez/Yazzie order. The plan outlines strategies to address outcome targets for specific populations as well as wide-ranging strategies intended to improve education for all students, such as early childhood education; extended learning programs; reading programs; college and career readiness; technology; and counselors, social workers, and other non-instructional staff.⁸

In April 2025, Judge Matthew Wilson of New Mexico's First Judicial District Court issued an order that PED and the State of New Mexico have not fulfilled their constitutional obligations to provide an equitable education for the identified 'at-risk' student population. Judge Wilson ordered PED to work collaboratively with the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) and community stakeholders to develop a comprehensive, statewide education plan. Per Judge Wilson's orders, the plan must be built with meaningful input from community members, educators, experts, and tribal nations, ensuring it is comprehensive, enforceable, and rooted in the lived experiences of those most affected. PED delivered the final comprehensive plan November 3, 2025.⁹ On February 20, 2026, plaintiffs filed a *Joint Motion for Further Relief Concerning Defendants' Failure to Develop a Comprehensive Remedial Action Plan that Complies with the Requirements of Previous Court Orders*.¹⁰ The resolution of this Joint Motion is pending as of June 2026.

Methodology

The study gathered and analyzed the following data sources to inform the findings.

Literature Review

EdRD reviewed and synthesized literature on professional learning for PreK–12 educators across rural, suburban, and urban settings. The review identified best practices related to learning formats and pedagogies, state and local requirements, and strategies for prioritizing content decisions. Special attention was given to professional learning that supports educator growth in enacting culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogies, integrating social-emotional learning, and facilitating inquiry-based instruction. The review also examined evidence regarding the state's role in supporting effective professional learning.

New Mexico Policy and Program Review

EdRD examined current professional learning licensure requirements and the professional learning opportunities available to PreK–12 educators across certification levels in New Mexico. This was accomplished by reviewing relevant policy documents and surveying state leaders. We analyzed legislation, state rules and regulations, funding sources, teacher contracts with

local education agencies, and the websites of professional learning providers—including the Public Education Department, the Bureau of Indian Education, educator associations, charter school organizations, and state-based nonprofit and private organizations. Advisors supported the process by recommending policy documents and facilitating connections with key state leaders when possible. We also compared New Mexico’s approach to advanced certification requirements with those in other states, and investigated how these states fund professional learning.

Educator Perspectives

EdRD partnered with Teach Plus to gather educator perspectives through surveys and focus groups. These tools aimed to assess educators’ awareness of professional learning opportunities and their views on the usefulness and content of those opportunities. We also gathered youth perspectives through a focus group of aspiring educators. The LANL Foundation and our advisory group provided feedback on recruitment strategies and data collection instruments and helped disseminate recruitment materials to encourage participation among key stakeholder groups. Teach Plus Fellows also provided feedback on the recommendations identified in this report.

Literature Review	NM Policy & Program Review	Educator Perspectives
• Learning Formats & pedagogies • State & local requirements • State role in supporting professional learning	• Laws • PED guidance • Funding • Contacts • Provider Surveys • Comparison to other states	• Statewide teacher survey • Focus groups • Teachers • Administrators • District leaders • Aspiring educators

This report is organized into the following chapters:

- **Chapter 1:** Introduction
- **Chapter 2:** A summary of promising professional learning practices from research;
- **Chapter 3:** A review of professional learning policies and programs in New Mexico and other states;
- **Chapter 4:** Findings from educator surveys and focus groups;
- **Chapter 5:** Key conclusions; and
- **Chapter 6:** Policy recommendations for strengthening educator professional learning in New Mexico

Chapter 1 Endnotes

¹ Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss & Shapley (2007). [Reviewing the Evidence on How Teacher Professional Development Affects Student Achievement](#).

² Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner (2017). [Effective Teacher Professional Development](#).

³ Kraft & Papay (2014). [Can Professional Environments in Schools Promote Teacher Development?](#)

⁴ TNTP (2015). [The Mirage: Confronting the Hard Truth about Our Quest for Teacher Professional Development](#).

⁵ Joyce & Showers (2002). [Student Achievement Through Staff Development](#).

⁶ Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner (2017). [Effective Teacher Professional Development](#).

⁷ Martinez and Yazzie Consolidated Lawsuit Decision & Order (2019) [No. D-101-CV-2014-00793](#) and [No. D-101- CV-2014-02224](#); Legislative Education Study Committee (2018). Yazzie and Martinez v. State of New Mexico: July 20, 2018 [Decision and Order](#).

⁸ State of New Mexico Public Education Department. (2022). [Decisions About Martinez/Yazzie V. State of New Mexico Action Plan Discussion Draft](#).

⁹ New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty (2025). [Press Release: Victory for Yazzie/Martinez Plaintiffs, Judge Orders Collaborative Education Plan After 7 Years of Community-Led Demands](#).

⁹ New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty (2026) [Joint Motion for Further Relief](#)

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review synthesizes research on the definitions, impact, features, topics, and structures of effective professional learning. It explores not only what makes professional learning successful, but also what limits its effectiveness when poorly designed or misaligned with teachers' real-world contexts. In doing so, the review places particular emphasis on professional learning approaches that support educators working with student groups named in the Martinez-Yazzie case including Native American students, English language learners, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students. The review ends with roles that states can play to improve educators' professional learning.



Definition

Professional development activities are intended to improve the knowledge, skills, beliefs, and practices of educators. Two different forms of professional development include training and professional learning.

- Informational training is typically used to deliver knowledge or standardized information efficiently and at scale, which makes it particularly useful for introducing new policies, technologies, or curricula.¹¹ Research notes that training sessions are usually short and consistent across participants, focusing on transferring specific content or skills that do not require extensive adaptation or customization.¹² Examples include a workshop to teach users how to utilize a new data system or a 60-minute online asynchronous module on sexual harassment, ensuring everyone is aware of the relevant laws on this topic.
- Professional learning is a form of professional development that focuses on building foundational knowledge and skills essential for a role, typically through collaborative and context-specific methods. Unlike training, professional learning adapts to the needs of small groups and evolves based on feedback and reflection, allowing educators to explore and refine practices over time.¹³ It emphasizes experiential, job-embedded learning that fosters long-term change in practice, tailored to the unique needs of teachers and their classrooms.¹⁴ Examples include professional learning communities that meet on an ongoing basis or cohort-based programs that meet regularly over the course of a year or longer.

The research overwhelmingly supports professional learning as the most effective approach to professional development, particularly since training often employs a passive, lecture-based model.¹⁵

Therefore, this project is focused on understanding the extent to which educators have access to strong professional learning, the features of which are described later in this literature review.

Impact of Professional Learning

Benefits

A growing body of evidence demonstrates that well-designed and effectively implemented, professional learning can lead to substantial improvements in teachers' skills, instructional practices, and student outcomes. Research indicates that effective, sustained professional learning enables teachers to refine their techniques and adopt new strategies in ways that directly impact student achievement.¹⁶ Moreover, professional learning can support teacher development at all levels of experience,

helping novice teachers build core competencies and experienced educators deepen their expertise and adapt to changing instructional demands.¹⁷

Importantly, the most impactful professional learning shares key characteristics: it is sustained over time, job-embedded, collaborative, and focused on specific content and student needs. These features enable teachers to translate new learning into practice and to reflect with colleagues on what works in their classrooms. For example, cycles of collaborative inquiry, instructional coaching, and professional learning communities have been associated with improvements in both instructional quality and student achievement.¹⁸ While not all professional learning experiences meet this high standard, research consistently shows that when these conditions are present, professional learning can be a powerful lever for instructional improvement and educational equity.

Potential Shortfalls

In many cases, professional learning falls short of achieving its intended benefits due to several common pitfalls, leaving many teachers dissatisfied with their professional learning experiences. Research shows that professional learning is often too brief, lacks relevance to teachers' daily practice, and does not provide sufficient follow-up support, which limits its impact.¹⁹ Moreover, professional learning outcomes can be short-lived without on-going classroom level support to integrate professional learning into teachers' practice.²⁰ Short, one-time workshops, for instance, rarely give teachers enough time to internalize new knowledge or integrate it into their teaching practices.²⁰ When professional learning does not align with the specific needs of teachers or students, it can feel disconnected from real classroom challenges, reducing teachers' engagement and motivation to apply new skills.²¹

According to the 2016 Scholastic Teacher & Principal School Report, many teachers report that their professional learning is not relevant to their subject area or grade level, making it difficult to apply new strategies to their classroom settings.²² This lack of personalization and sustained support can lead to frustration, as educators feel their time could be better spent on practical, collaborative learning experiences that are directly related to their students' needs.²³ Consequently, teachers often desire more meaningful opportunities that genuinely support their growth and improve their instructional practices, highlighting the importance of responsive, context-specific professional learning that aligns with the realities of teaching.²⁴

Effective professional learning requires a sustained and coherent approach that is responsive to teachers' contexts and includes opportunities for active learning and collaboration that evolve over the course of a teacher's career, elements that are too often missing in traditional professional learning models.²⁵ The following section elaborates on features of professional learning that make it effective and valued by teachers.

Features of Effective Professional Learning

The following features of professional learning experiences have been shown to improve the impact on teacher practice and student outcomes: aligned to adult learning theory, aligned to socio-cultural learning theory, collaborative, job-embedded, balanced, and sustained. Importantly, a single professional learning experience does not need to include all of these features to have a positive impact.

Aligned to Adult Learning Theory

Professional learning is more effective when it reflects principles from adult learning theory. The principles of adult learning theory—self-direction, relevance, connection to experience, and practical application—have been examined and refined through numerous studies.²⁶ For example:

- Self-directed learning: Research supports that adults often prefer autonomy and control over their learning, finding that structured opportunities for self-direction lead to better outcomes.²⁷
- Experience-driven learning: Empirical studies have found that adults retain and apply knowledge more effectively when it builds on prior experiences and is applicable to real-life tasks.²⁸
- Goal orientation and practical application: Adults are typically motivated by clearly defined, achievable goals and by learning that has direct practical value in work or daily life, a finding reinforced by studies on workplace training.

Aligned to Socio-Cultural Learning Theory

Socio-cultural learning theory, based on the work of Vygotsky and expanded by later researchers, emphasizes that learning is inherently a social and culturally embedded process. In this framework, knowledge is actively constructed through social interactions, with learning enhanced by language, cultural tools, and community practices. Learning is most effective when it involves:

- Authentic practice, which refers to engaging in meaningful, real-world activities that reflect actual tasks and responsibilities. For instance, educators gain deeper understanding when professional learning encourages them to apply new strategies in genuine classroom contexts, such as enacting new teaching practices, evaluating student work or designing lesson plans.²⁹
- Modeling during which “masters” or experts demonstrate effective practices. This might involve showcasing instructional strategies, allowing learners to observe and reflect on high-quality practices. Modeling is more impactful when practitioners explicitly identify and explain the techniques being demonstrated. Modeling is also more impactful when led by accomplished educators with a track record of effective instruction.³¹
- Expert support is beneficial when it includes “scaffolding”, in which experts initially guide learners closely and gradually reduce support as learners gain competence.³² Feedback and reflection are also vital; teachers improve by analyzing lessons and receiving input on their practice, often with peers or coaches. Joyce and Showers (2002) demonstrate that coaching, which includes modeling and feedback, leads to more successful implementation of new teaching strategies.³³ Meanwhile, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) emphasize the importance of mentoring, particularly for novice teachers, finding that strong mentorship programs enhance teacher retention and effectiveness.³⁴
- Rich dialogue facilitates deeper learning. In constructive discussions, learners clarify their ideas, question assumptions, and collaboratively build a deeper understanding. Professional learning providers can support this by establishing structured interactions that foster engagement and reflection.³⁵
- Cognitive structuring helps organize and frame ideas, giving learners conceptual and procedural tools to scaffold their thinking. These tools often take the form of frameworks or protocols.



Collaborative

Collaboration is a crucial feature of effective professional learning because it enables teachers to work together to share ideas, refine instructional practices, and solve challenges, fostering a supportive community focused on continuous improvement.³⁷ Collaboration, whether it occurs in job-embedded or classroom situations, provides opportunities for “rich dialogue” during which individuals state and explain positions, negotiate, and clarify meaning and constructively challenge each other’s thinking.³⁸ Research shows that collaborative learning is not only the most frequent form of professional learning but is also viewed by teachers as highly beneficial, as it directly relates to their daily teaching contexts and student needs.³⁹ Studies highlight that quality collaboration, particularly when job-embedded, enhances instructional practices and can lead to improved student outcomes.⁴¹ For example, co-teaching and lesson study (which are collaborative forms of professional learning), foster greater changes in teacher practice and student outcomes. Collaborative professional learning also promotes positive cultural shifts within schools and districts, creating unified teams committed to shared goals and enhancing educational equity, particularly when focused on underserved student populations such as English language learners.⁴²

Balanced

Without refuting the idea that job-embedded professional learning is desirable, some research suggests that professional learning should not be ONLY job-embedded. The 70-20-10 model of professional development is a widely adopted framework emphasizing that effective learning for adults typically occurs through a combination of experiences: 70% from on-

the-job, experiential learning; 20% from social or collaborative learning; and 10% from formal education, such as workshops or courses. Research supporting this model suggests that experiential learning is particularly impactful because it allows individuals to apply skills and knowledge directly within their work context, reinforcing retention and practical understanding.⁴³ The social aspect, comprising 20% of learning, involves mentoring, coaching, and feedback from colleagues or supervisors, which enhances skill acquisition through reflection and dialogue.⁴⁴ The formal learning component, though smallest, is essential for providing foundational knowledge and structured frameworks that learners can then practice and discuss within their roles. Studies indicate that organizations using the 70-20-10 model see improved employee engagement and skill retention, as the model aligns learning closely with real-world tasks and encourages peer support in development processes.⁴⁵

Sustained, Substantial and Coordinated

Research indicates that sustained duration is crucial for effective professional learning, as it enables educators to internalize new concepts, practice skills over time, and receive ongoing feedback. Unlike brief workshops, which often fail to produce lasting changes in teacher practice, long-term professional learning provides the continuity necessary for teachers to adapt and refine new strategies in real classroom settings. Yoon and colleagues found that professional learning spanning several months with multiple sessions had a greater impact on student achievement compared to shorter, one-time training.⁴⁶ This finding aligns with Desimone's 2009 framework, which highlights duration as a key feature of effective professional learning, as it promotes deeper understanding and integration of skills. Additionally, sustained professional learning fosters collaborative learning environments where teachers can engage in reflective dialogue, share challenges, and support each other's growth over time.⁴⁷ Research confirms that effective professional learning is a continuous process, benefiting from structured opportunities for teachers to revisit, practice, and refine their approaches, leading to more substantial and lasting improvements in teaching and student outcomes. Therefore, it is not surprising that Yoon and colleagues found that teachers who receive substantial professional learning can significantly boost their students' achievement. From a sustainability perspective, Cobb and colleagues found that professional learning needs to take place as a part of a coherent set of supports, strategies, and initiatives coordinated across a system, including central offices, schools, and classrooms.⁴⁸

Topics of Professional Learning

Research identifies several key topics that are most effective for educator professional learning in terms of positively impacting teaching practices and student outcomes. These topics include:

- **Content-Specific Pedagogy:** professional learning that focuses on subject-specific instructional strategies—such as literacy techniques in English Language Arts or conceptual understanding in math and science—has been shown to improve teachers' content knowledge and their ability to teach that content effectively. Studies indicate that when teachers deepen their understanding of both content and related pedagogical approaches, they are better equipped to foster student learning.
- **Classroom Management and Student Engagement:** Effective professional learning often includes training in classroom management techniques and strategies to increase student engagement, which is essential for creating a conducive learning environment. Research shows that when teachers are skilled in managing classrooms and engaging students, it can reduce disruptions and increase instructional time, ultimately leading to improved student achievement.⁴⁹
- **Data-Driven Instruction:** Training educators to use data to inform instruction helps them identify student needs, adjust teaching methods, and track progress. Research supports that professional learning focused on analyzing student assessment data leads to better instructional decisions and more targeted interventions, which can significantly improve student outcomes.⁵⁰
- **Culturally Responsive, Relevant, and Sustaining Pedagogy:** Given the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students, professional learning in culturally responsive, relevant, and sustaining teaching prepares educators to create environments that advance students' learning, develop cultural competence, and foster critical consciousness.⁵¹ Research shows that when teachers are equipped to connect with and recognize students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and assets, it fosters a more supportive and effective learning environment.⁵²
- **Differentiation and Inclusive Practices:** With increasing diversity in classrooms, professional learning that addresses differentiation strategies and inclusive practices is critical. This includes training on how to tailor instruction to meet the needs of students with various abilities, backgrounds, and learning styles. Professional learning in differentiation enables teachers to make instruction accessible and effective for all students, particularly those with special needs or English language learners.⁵³
- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):** professional learning on SEL equips teachers to support their own and their students' emotional well-being and social skills, which research shows can lead to better academic performance and improved classroom climate. Training on SEL is also linked to reducing student behavioral issues and improving teacher-student relationships. Professional learning that focused on teachers' social-emotional health can also address teacher burnout, turnover, and well-being.⁵⁵

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- **Technology Integration:** As digital tools become more prevalent, professional learning on effective technology integration helps teachers leverage these resources to enhance learning. Research indicates that when teachers are trained to integrate technology purposefully, it can increase student engagement, personalize learning, and expand access to resources.⁵⁶

These topics were likely found to be effective because they address practices that are important to student outcomes. They also address areas of need for educators in that place and time. For example, learning how to use a computer was a widespread need in the early 2000s, but is no longer a need because the vast majority of teachers now know how to use a computer. Currently Artificial Intelligence is a common need, but this might change in the future. Professional learning topics should be chosen with an understanding that needs can vary over time and across individuals and schools.

Educators of Historically Marginalized Students

Many of the topics listed above are particularly important for educators serving historically marginalized students, such as those named in the Martinez/Yazzie lawsuit: socioeconomically disadvantaged children, English learners, Native American students, and children with disabilities. Research suggests the most important topics for educators of these students include: culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining pedagogy, data-driven instruction, and differentiation and inclusive practices. In addition, educators serving these students also benefit from Professional learning that addresses:

- Family and community engagement professional learning that prepares teachers to build partnerships with families, especially in linguistically and culturally diverse communities.⁵⁷
- Asset-based and trauma-informed practices that recognize the strengths and resilience of students from underserved backgrounds while also understanding the impacts of poverty, racism, and trauma.⁵⁸
- Indigenous perspectives on teacher learning such as the Indigenous Teacher Education Project (University of Arizona),⁵⁹ NACA Inspired School's Network's (NSIN) Resource Hub, Learning in Places (Northwestern University), New Zealand's bicultural professional standards for teachers⁶² illustrate how professional learning can center Indigenous knowledge systems, language revitalization, and community healing.

Structures for Professional Learning

Programs of varying lengths and formats can produce wide-ranging effects depending on how time is used.⁶³

Research identifies several structures for educator professional learning that have the potential to support sustained changes in teaching practices and improvements in student outcomes. These structures include:

- **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):** PLCs involve small groups of teachers meeting regularly to engage in collaborative inquiry, reflect on instructional practices, and analyze student data. Research shows that PLCs help foster a culture of shared learning and collective responsibility, leading to improved teaching and student achievement when they are well-supported and sustained over time.⁶⁴
- **Coaching and Mentoring:** Instructional coaching and mentoring involve one-on-one or small group sessions with an experienced educator or instructional coach who provides feedback, models best practices, and helps teachers apply new strategies in their classrooms. Studies show that coaching is one of the most effective professional learning structures because it offers personalized support and encourages reflective practice.⁶⁵ Strong coaching is aligned with the features of strong professional learning, especially being focused on authentic practice, collaboration, and sustained duration.⁶⁶
- **Workshops and Seminars with Follow-Up Support:** While stand-alone workshops are typically less effective, workshops that are part of a series and include follow-up support (such as coaching or peer collaboration) can positively impact teaching practices. Studies suggest that workshops can serve as an introduction to new ideas, but follow-up sessions and support are critical for meaningful application.⁶⁷
- **Lesson Study:** Lesson study is a collaborative professional learning structure where teachers jointly plan, observe, and analyze research lessons. Originating in Japan, lesson study helps teachers deepen their instructional practices by focusing on lesson design, observing student responses, and refining approaches based on shared reflection and analysis.³³
- **Action Research:** In action research, teachers identify specific instructional challenges or questions, conduct research in their classrooms, and systematically collect and analyze data to make evidence-based decisions about their teaching. Research shows that action research empowers teachers to engage in inquiry, adapt instruction based on evidence, and develop a deeper understanding of their practice.⁶⁸

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- **Microcredentials:** Microcredentials are competency-based certifications that allow educators to focus on specific skills or topics, demonstrating mastery through evidence-based assessments. Educators earn microcredentials by completing online modules, submitting examples of their work, and receiving feedback from assessors. Research supports the effectiveness of microcredentials, as they provide targeted, personalized learning that enables teachers to apply skills immediately in their classrooms. Additionally, microcredentials support self-paced, flexible learning, allowing teachers to address particular needs and interests in a structured format.⁶⁹
 - **Online Learning and Virtual Communities:** With the growth of digital platforms, online professional learning and virtual learning communities offer teachers flexibility and access to resources. Virtual communities, webinars, and online courses allow teachers to connect with peers across distances and participate in professional learning at their own pace, which can be particularly beneficial when combined with interactive, collaborative components.⁷⁰
 - **Job-Embedded Professional Learning:** Job-embedded professional learning takes place within the context of teachers' daily work, such as co-planning lessons, conducting peer observations, or analyzing student work during collaborative planning periods. Several structures listed above—such as PLCs, coaching, and lesson study—could be considered job-embedded if they are carried out in the context of educators' roles and responsibilities. While some people refer to any professional learning that happens during the school day as "job-embedded," this conceptualization is not aligned with the research. If a school has a guest speaker on a professional development half-day, this learning is not embedded in carrying out the roles and responsibilities of teaching. Research supports that job-embedded learning is highly effective because it is relevant and directly applicable to teachers' classroom challenges, enabling immediate practice and refinement of new strategies.⁷¹

While much research has focused on formal professional learning structures, educators also rely on informal learning opportunities—such as online communities of practice, social media networks, and peer-to-peer mentoring—which provide timely, flexible, and often highly contextualized support. These informal pathways are particularly valuable in rural and under-resourced contexts, where access to formal professional learning may be limited.

The research on the effectiveness of professional learning structures is mixed. When done well, they can have positive impacts on educator practice and student outcomes. But when implemented poorly, they can be ineffective and waste educators' time.⁷² For example, while there is a strong research base for PLCs, they can also be ineffective if they are not fully supported by the school administration or lack a structured focus.⁷³ Research notes that time constraints, lack of administrative support, and insufficient facilitation can impede the success of PLCs. The structures for professional learning are more likely to be effective when they reflect the research-based features. For example, PLCs are more effective when they provide opportunities for rich dialogue and collaboration. Unfortunately, many educators engage in activities that have been labeled as "PLCs" but are just teacher meetings without rich dialogue and collaboration.

Rural Versus Urban Contexts

While not explicitly named in the Yazzie-Martinez case, over half of New Mexico students attend rural schools. Although the core principles of effective professional learning remain constant—sustained, job-embedded, etc.—local assets, constraints, and needs can vary across rural and urban schools, which can impact professional learning needs differently in these contexts.

Rural Contexts

Rural educators often experience isolation, staffing limitations, and travel barriers, which affect access to sustained professional learning.⁷⁵ States can strengthen rural systems by investing in broadband access, travel stipends, and flexible scheduling. Effective strategies include:

- 1: **Virtual and Hybrid Models:** Online professional learning formats help overcome geographic isolation and reduce travel time and costs.⁷⁶
For example, the REL Southwest found virtual PLCs to be especially valuable in rural districts.⁷⁷
- 2: **Regional Collaboratives and Networks:** States can organize consortia of rural districts to pool resources and co-deliver high-quality professional learning.⁷⁸ For example, the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center highlighted regional professional learning networks that foster shared leadership and teacher collaboration.⁷⁹
- 3: **On-the-Job Coaching and Mentoring:** When in-person, coaching models may be delivered by regional support staff (e.g., Education Service Centers) to build capacity within schools.⁸⁰ Rural schools benefit from embedded models due to lack of substitutes and travel challenges.⁸¹



Urban Contexts

Urban districts across the country tend to have greater student diversity, more centralized infrastructure, and often higher teacher turnover. Urban districts may benefit from more formative data systems, peer networks, and comprehensive coaching systems. Effective structures include:

- 1: Culturally Responsive, Equity-Focused professional learning. Urban educators benefit from professional learning that addresses systemic inequities and supports diverse learners.⁸²
- 2: Instructional Leadership Pathways. Urban systems often invest in leadership pipelines and school-based instructional coaches to support continuous improvement. For example, New York City's Learning Partners Program facilitates school-to-school learning and peer networks.⁸³
- 3: Data-Driven Cycles of Inquiry. Urban districts often have the capacity for robust formative assessment systems that inform job-embedded professional learning cycles.⁸⁴

State Roles in Strengthening Educator Professional Learning

States have a unique and powerful role in shaping the quality and accessibility of professional learning for educators. By leveraging their authority and resources, states can improve teaching effectiveness and student outcomes across school systems. The following nine roles illustrate how states can lead in this work, each supported by examples and evidence-based recommendations.

- 1: Policy Framework Setter. States establish the policy conditions under which local decisions are made, such as setting minimum professional learning hour requirements, defining allowable uses of professional learning time, and specifying links between professional learning and licensure, evaluation, or school improvement plans. While individual districts and unions negotiate the details of professional learning through collective bargaining, they do so within state-defined boundaries and requirements. For example, Michigan allows districts to count up to 10 hours of state-approved professional learning toward instructional time—subject to quality standards, timing limits, and alignment with district improvement goals.⁸⁵
- 2: Professional learning Standards Definer. One critical element of a professional learning policy framework is a set of standards defining high-quality professional learning. By adopting standards such as Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning, states can require that professional learning be sustained, job-embedded, data-driven, and aligned with student learning needs.⁸⁶ For example, Colorado adopted Learning Forward's standards and embedded them into state policy, ensuring district professional learning plans align with evidence-based principles.
- 3: Funder. States control critical funding streams that can be directed toward high-quality professional learning. By allocating federal funds, such as Title II-A, and additional state resources strategically, states can promote equity and sustainability in professional learning access.⁸⁷ For example, Tennessee's "Grow Your Own" initiative uses a combination of federal and state funding to support job-embedded teacher preparation and development in high-need areas.

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- 4: Program Authorizer and Endorser. States can serve as gatekeepers of quality by using its policy framework and professional learning standards to authorize or endorse professional learning programs and providers. This ensures alignment with research-based standards and allows districts to select vetted offerings.⁸⁷ For example, Massachusetts' Department of Elementary and Secondary Education maintains a list of approved professional learning providers aligned with state goals and requires providers to demonstrate impact on educator practice and student learning.
 - 5: Licensure Requirement Setter. States can promote sustained engagement in professional learning by embedding it into educator licensure promotion and renewal requirements, helping educators to maintain state/national standards of practice.⁸⁸ For example, Illinois requires educators to complete 120 hours of professional learning over a five-year renewal period.⁸⁹ These licensure requirements help establish professional learning as a core component of an educator's career trajectory—not an optional add-on.
 - 6: Professional Learning Provider. In some cases, state education agencies (SEAs) directly provide professional learning—especially in areas where local capacity is limited or where specific initiatives require broad implementation. For example, the Louisiana Department of Education offers virtual and in-person training aligned with its early literacy initiative, ensuring consistent delivery of content across the state.⁹⁰
 - 7: Data Collector and Evaluator. States are uniquely positioned to collect, analyze, and report data on the impact of professional learning. This enables continuous improvement and accountability. For example, North Carolina uses the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) system to analyze the effectiveness of professional learning by linking educator growth to student outcomes, informing state and district decisions.
 - 8: Technical Assistance Provider. States can support districts and schools in designing, implementing, and improving professional learning systems through guidance, tools, coaching, and technical support.⁹¹ The technical assistance can address conditions for professional learning, such as how to structure union contracts or how to create school schedules that allow time for collaborative learning. For example, the Texas Education Agency supports school districts through its ESCs (Education Service Centers), which provide regional coaching and assistance aligned with state priorities.
 - 9: Convener and Collaborator. States can bring together diverse stakeholders—including higher education, districts, unions, and nonprofits—to foster collaboration and coherence in professional learning systems.⁹² For example, Washington State created the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) to collaborate with educator preparation programs and K–12 systems to align professional learning across the educator career continuum.
 - 10: Equity Champion. States must ensure that professional learning opportunities are equitably accessible, especially in rural or under-resourced districts, and that content is inclusive and culturally responsive. For example, Oregon's Educator Advancement Council focuses on diversifying the educator workforce and provides grants for equity-centered professional learning programs, particularly in districts serving historically marginalized students.
 - 11: Innovation Catalyst. States can promote new and promising models of professional learning through pilot programs, innovation grants, and scaling of effective practices⁹³. For example, Rhode Island launched an Educator Innovation Challenge to fund educator-designed professional learning models, fostering grassroots solutions and statewide learning. North Carolina created the Advanced Teaching Roles (ATR) program to create teacher leader positions that acknowledges high performing teachers while simultaneously leveraging them to support the professional learning of other teachers. Many districts in North Carolina use strategic staffing approaches such as Opportunity Culture or Next Education Workforce, to foster implementation of the ATR model.⁹⁴
 - 12: Leadership Capacity Builder. States can strengthen professional learning by investing in the leadership capacity of principals, instructional coaches, and district leaders who shape the conditions for teacher growth. This includes leadership academies, coaching, and communities of practice.⁹⁵ States can also ensure that leadership preparation programs and licensure systems reinforce leader skills in fostering professional learning. For example, the Tennessee Department of Education, in partnership with universities and districts, runs Leadership Academies for aspiring principals and district leaders. These programs emphasize instructional leadership and the ability to create cultures of collaborative professional learning in schools. The state also convenes networks of principals and district leaders to share practices on supporting teacher professional learning.⁹⁶

By taking on these roles, states can create coherent, sustainable systems that support systematic and systemic continuous professional growth for all educators—ultimately improving student learning outcomes across diverse contexts.

Conclusion

Research has found that particular professional learning topics and structures are associated with improved teacher practice and student outcomes, but the outcomes have been mixed depending on the quality of implementation. The research base behind the features of professional learning is much more robust and consistent, suggesting that the features are what matters most, regardless of the topic or structure. Professional learning is most effective when it is aligned to adult learning theory, aligned to socio-cultural learning theory, collaborative, job-embedded, balanced, coordinated, and sustained.

Regardless of the structure used, designers of these professional learning opportunities should understand the research-based features that enable effectiveness and help teachers maintain state and national standards of practice. For example, the Micro-Credentials Partnership of States has established micro-credential quality assurance standards to describe the characteristics of high-quality micro-credentials³⁷. Professional learning designers and facilitators should also monitor implementation and be prepared to make adjustments if and when challenges with implementation arise.

Despite the strong evidence base on features of effective professional learning, there is limited research on Indigenous-centered professional learning in the U.S., the long-term impact of informal or online communities of practice, and professional learning that explicitly integrates teacher well-being, resilience, and adult SEL. These represent promising areas for further study, especially in the context of New Mexico.

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CHAPTER 3: POLICY AND PROGRAM REVIEW

This chapter reviews policies and programs that shape professional learning in New Mexico, including educator contract and licensure requirements, the availability and structure of professional learning offerings, and the state's use of federal funding. The analysis compares these policies and programs to those in other states. It also examines whether and how professional learning addresses three state priorities: 1) the needs of historically marginalized student populations (as emphasized in the Martinez/Yazzie court ruling); 2) structured literacy; and 3) math instructional practices⁹⁸. Throughout, the chapter highlights promising practices and areas for potential improvement of professional learning opportunities for New Mexico educators.

Data Collection Methods

We used a variety of methods to review the policies and programs that influence educator professional learning in New Mexico. We did not seek to learn about every professional learning opportunity offered by providers in the state; rather, we purposefully sampled organizations and paid particular attention to opportunities that addressed state priorities. While each of these data sources sheds light on New Mexico policies and practices, they each have important limitations as described below.

Regulatory Review: We examined licensure and professional learning policies via the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) website, statutes, and administrative code. We then compared these practices to national research and practices in other states. Importantly, there are few comprehensive national studies that compare professional learning policies across states, limiting our ability to measure New Mexico's practices with other states.

Collective Bargaining Agreement Review: We conducted a web search and sent inquiries to superintendents to obtain current collective bargaining agreements (CBA) or contracts from New Mexico local education agencies (LEAs). We analyzed 10 CBAs or contracts to identify themes. Notably, this review relies primarily on CBAs available on the web, often from larger districts, due to limited LEA response to our outreach. The trends identified in the analysis may skew toward strengths or areas of growth for larger LEAs.

Professional Learning Opportunity Scan: We reviewed 55 websites—including those of PED, LEAs, Regional Education Cooperatives (RECs), and professional learning providers that focus on state priority areas. The LEAs were sampled to represent geographic spread, district size, and school type (public, charter, tribally controlled, etc.). A total of 274 professional learning opportunities were identified and coded by topic, structure, and alignment to populations or areas of opportunity emphasized in the Martinez/Yazzie ruling. However, several limitations of this approach are worth mentioning:

- Information available online may not be up-to-date or include all professional learning an organization provides. The data represents a snapshot in time with some professional learning expiring or being added after data collection.
- Limited information about the offerings may be provided online, limiting the researcher's ability to code professional learning effectively.
- Website layout, including the use of intranet systems or offerings hosted behind paywalls, may make identifying professional learning difficult.
- Online information may oversample some forms of professional learning (workshops) and under sample others (PLCs).
- Staff-developed professional learning may not be publicized externally.
- National organizations offering state-specific programming may not be fully captured.
- Larger LEAs may be overrepresented due to greater staff capacity to update websites.
- Professional learning providers that do not prioritize advertising via the internet may be underrepresented.

PED Director Survey: Directors and deputy directors from 29 PED divisions or bureaus were invited to complete a survey about the scope, structure, and focus of their professional learning offerings. Fourteen individuals across 12 divisions or bureaus responded. Importantly, directors provided their perceptions of the professional learning provided by their division or bureau not an account of each professional learning opportunity offered. This approach could lead to directors providing socially desirable responses in their generalizations about the professional learning offered by their division or bureau. Additionally, directors may have had differing perceptions of how to classify professional learning or accounted for professional learning projects under development in their responses.

New Mexico Administrative Code outlines a state professional learning framework¹⁰⁷, which requires that professional learning funded by the state:

- Align with National Staff Development Council standards.¹⁰⁸
- Be evaluated every three years using the following criteria:¹⁰⁹
 - Participant learning
 - Participant response
 - Organizational change and support
 - Participant use of knowledge and skills
 - Student learning
- Explicitly state the content of expected professional learning plans (learning goals, adult learning strategies used, connection to student learning data) and the context in which they will be offered (resources, goals, data related to student learning, and collaboration among teachers and administrators) in funding proposals.

At least 35 states have similarly adopted or adapted Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning¹¹⁰. However, few states vet their professional learning providers or only audit a few providers annually. As profiled in Table 1, a few states require providers to be accredited by entities such as the International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training, with most utilizing a state-run approval process.

Our survey of PED leaders, however, indicates uneven implementation of the Professional Learning Framework. Only 57% percent of directors indicated that their division or bureau's professional learning offerings have been evaluated and those that have been evaluated often lack some of the evaluation components outlined in the Professional Learning Framework. Besides some analysis of LEA professional learning goals within their Educational Plans (Ed Plan)¹¹², it was unclear to what extent other aspects of the Professional Learning Framework are being implemented by PED. For instance, we were unable to determine whether all professional learning provided by PED divisions or bureaus was reviewed tri-annually. Additionally, 85% of respondents reported that they do not utilize the National Staff Development Council's Standards (NSDC) for Professional Development¹¹³ to guide the design and implementation of their division or bureau's professional learning programs.

Collective Bargaining Agreements

To understand how contractual requirements may play a role in shaping professional learning opportunities for New Mexican educators, we analyzed teacher contracts or collective bargaining agreements from ten LEAs, including charter and district schools. Key findings from that analysis include:

- Only 20% specified individual professional learning planning expectations such as the use of a professional development plan.
- 50% limited the time educators could be required to participate in professional learning.¹¹⁴
- 40% addressed compensation for additional professional learning time.
- 20% stipulated required professional learning days, while another 20% made the timing of professional learning contingent on the approved district calendar.

Analysis of Professional Learning Offerings

To understand the professional learning opportunities available to New Mexican educators, we examined data from: 1) websites describing professional learning offerings and 2) survey responses from PED directors. The analysis had as its primary goals to a) catalog the professional learning opportunities, b) assess the structures through which professional learning was most frequently provided, and c) identify the degree to which those offerings focused on state priority areas.

Website Analysis

We sampled the websites of the ten largest school districts, five tribal schools, five charter schools, educator associations, universities with centers/institutes focused on providing professional learning opportunities to educators, key private and nonprofit organizations, regional education cooperatives, and the Public Education Department.

We identified 274 professional learning opportunities across 55 entities. While this does not capture every professional learning opportunity available in New Mexico, the goal was to gather a large and diverse enough sample to provide a sense of the types of offerings available statewide.

Table 1. Summary of State Approaches to Professional Learning for Licensure Renewal

Key Questions	State Approaches
What kind of credit is required? How many professional learning credits/hours must educators receive to renew a license?	Generally, states require one of two types of credit: • Professional Learning Credits/Continuing Education Units: Many states create their own system for measuring professional development credit, typically based on clock hours—a few use CEUs. • Credit/Semester/Quarter Hours: A few states require educators to take coursework at a college or university. Others do not stipulate that coursework must occur at a college or university but require that a candidate take an amount of coursework equivalent to the number of credit/semester/quarter hours the state requires. When credit hours are required, educators must earn between 6 - 8 credit/semester hours (typically, 6) or 9 quarter hours to renew their license. Where professional learning credits/continuing education units are required, educators must earn between 90 - 120 (with some states requiring up to 270 clock hours). These requirements tend to be broadly written so that the same requirements are applicable to both teachers and administrators. A few states decrease Professional learning credit/hour requirements for educators with advanced degrees.
How long does an educator have to achieve their required number of professional learning credits/hours?	Timelines range between 3 - 7 years, with many landing at 5 years. Some states stipulate that a certain number of credits must be earned each year in the renewal window (typically, 15 clock hours); others only require that an educator meet the total number of hours needed before the educator renews their license.
Who can provide professional learning credits/hours?	Professional learning credits are provided by colleges and universities, approved non-profit organizations, and regional education service entities (typically overseen by the state education agency). • In some cases, a state approves an entity to be an authorized provider. Once approved, the provider can offer courses for credit so long as they align with the state's approved standards. • In other cases, the state approves coursework that an entity provides and authorizes an entity to provide that coursework for a specific number of professional learning credits or clock hours. (A few states require non-IHE providers to be accredited by a group like International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training to provide CEUs. Many others utilize a state-based approval process.)
How do states approach what content an educator must seek professional	There are three typical approaches: • A broad requirement that the professional learning is related to a current license/endorsement or is part of an approved program leading to a license or endorsement. • Stipulating specific content that a license holder must take while allowing elective coursework. • Requiring that the coursework be aligned to the state's leadership framework (this is typically measured by the fact that the state has approved the provider or specific coursework). Some states require that an educator have an individual professional learning plan on file with their district.

Table 2 compares all professional learning opportunities with those offered by the PED and highlights characteristics emphasized in the Martinez/Yazzie court ruling. Key findings include:

- **Tendency to be structured:** 56% of all opportunities were standalone or multi-session training events, whereas only 11% involved coaching and 9% used PLCs. PED opportunities were even more likely to be standalone (80%).
- **Limited focus on priority areas:** Less than 10% addressed literacy or math instruction; 21% targeted students with disabilities, but that was the only priority group to exceed 10%.

Several limitations to this analysis might be affecting the results.

- Organizations, including PED, might be more likely to post information about structured professional learning opportunities on websites; meanwhile, they may be less likely to post information about less formal opportunities such as coaching and PLCs, especially if they need to be accessed through partnerships and are not available publicly.
- Website descriptions might not capture actual focus on marginalized students, which may be addressed in more nuanced ways.
- Information available online may not be up-to-date or include all of the professional learning an organization provides.
- Additionally, professional learning providers that do not prioritize advertising via the internet may be underrepresented.

Table 2. Key Characteristics of Sampled PL Opportunities (N=274)

PL Opportunity Characteristics	All PL Opportunities	PED PL Opportunities	Martinez/Yazzie Focus
Black students are a target population	1.4%	3%	☐
Related to literacy instructional practices	6%	6%	☐
Related to math instructional practices	7%	3.5%	☐
Standalone or multi-session training event	56%	80%	☐
Coaching or peer observation	11%	4%	☐
Professional learning communities (PLC)	9%	11%	☐
Culturally & linguistically responsive instruction	8%	6%	✓
Native American students are a target population	3%	1%	✓
Hispanic students are a target population	0.3%	0%	✓
Students with disabilities are target population	21%	27%	✓
Bi/multilingual students	3%	4%	✓
English language learners	1%	2%	✓
Economically disadvantaged students	.007%	.01%	✓

Note: Percentages exceed 100% because some opportunities aligned with more than one category.

It is also important to note that this analysis focused on how readily available professional learning is. It does not measure how frequently an available professional learning opportunity may be used. For instance, New Mexico has provided Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS), a professional learning program designed to build teacher and administrator knowledge concerning the science of reading and structured literacy.¹¹⁵ The centralized roll out of this professional learning resource might explain why there are few professional learning opportunities for structured literacy, while educator participation in the training may be high. However, this scenario is not true for all priority topics. Taken together, the findings of the professional learning offering analysis suggest that there is an opportunity for the state to better track professional learning offerings to help districts and the state align topics and structures of professional learning offerings with district and statewide priorities.

PED Director Surveys

We administered a survey to directors and deputy directors at the New Mexico Public Education Department, specifically those leading divisions or bureaus that offer professional learning to educators. The survey examined directors' perspectives on several key topics, including the nature of the professional learning their division/bureau provides, the extent to which that professional learning focuses on the three priority areas, and whether those offerings varied by region of the state.

Findings suggest that PED-provided professional learning:

- Tends to be short term. PED directors indicated that their divisions or bureaus tend to provide one-shot, standalone professional learning opportunities rather than collaborative, job-embedded approaches, with 50 - 57% of respondents indicating that their unit utilizes training, conferences, seminars, or institutes as a training method.
- Tends to use PLCs. 50% of respondents noted that their division utilized PLCs for professional learning
- Inconsistently focus on state priority areas. Division and deputy directors indicated that the professional learning provided by their departments focused on the three priority areas in this study to differing degrees
 - 35% of PED directors indicated that their division or bureau's professional learning focused on math instructional practices.
 - 21% of PED directors indicated that their division or bureau's professional learning focused on structured literacy practices.
 - 78% of PED directors indicated that their division or bureau's professional learning focused on instructional strategies to address the needs of historically marginalized populations.¹¹⁶
- Can vary across geographical areas. The majority (85%) of PED divisions/bureaus indicated that they provide professional learning statewide and through multiple modalities—in-person, online, and/or hybrid (64%). However, service gaps may still exist. No respondent indicated a focus on providing services in Northeast or Southwest New Mexico.¹¹⁷

PROMISING PRACTICES: EMBEDDING HIGH-QUALITY Professional Learning PRACTICES IN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS (CBAS)

Several CBAs model strong professional learning practices:

Framing the planning of professional learning opportunities as a partnership between educators and administration.

- Socorro Consolidated Schools Contract for Certified Educators: *"The District and the Union encourage employees to make suggestions regarding professional development. Required training and needs will be determined by the administration with input from the employee."*

Acknowledging the need for both district and site directed professional learning opportunities.

- Albuquerque Public Schools CBA: *"APS and ATF believe that professional development is most effective when it is site-based, embedded in everyday work, and offered "just in time."*

Identifying collaboration time as group work that can be counted for up to 60 hours of professional time if it meets certain requirements.

- Los Lunas Schools CBA: *"Collaboration time is group work time. It is our goal that teachers and instructional support personnel have two hours each week to work collaboratively to improve instruction, implement district curriculum, examine student work, and work with others to better meet the needs of all students. If requirements are met, collaboration time may be counted as 60 hours of professional development time for elementary, and 30 hours for secondary."*

Piloting a peer support role with full release time to develop capacity of peers across a year.

- Los Lunas Schools CBA: *"The Peer Support Program is a part of a continuum of teacher development. Its purpose is to improve professional practice, retain promising teachers, and build professional knowledge that will improve student success ... The peer support teacher(s) will be on full-time release for the school year."*

Synthesis of Findings Across Website and Survey Data

There are differences between what we observed in our analysis of publicized professional learning opportunities and data from the PED Director Survey. Most notably, directors' reports and published materials suggest different levels of support for priority topics (math, structured literacy, and historically marginalized populations) and the types of professional learning structures PED divisions and bureaus use to engage educators and administrators.

Possible reasons for this difference include:

- PED directors responded generally about the professional learning topics offered and the structures used, whereas the web analysis accounted for each publicized professional learning opportunity.
- Incomplete information being available on the division or bureau's website.
- Differing perceptions on how to classify professional learning opportunities or what counts as addressing a particular topic.
- Inclusion of professional learning that is under development.

Despite these differences, a complementary set of key findings emerges:

- The PED was the largest non-LEA provider of professional learning opportunities, offering 52% of the opportunities we identified across the state. These opportunities were typically provided directly by PED, but sometimes in partnership with other entities (nonprofit or university partners).
- There is a limited and inconsistent focus on professional learning for key state priorities.
- While PED provides services statewide through hybrid and online modalities, some regions of the state may still experience service gaps and/or predominantly have access to PED training through hybrid/online offerings.

Funding Analysis

Our analysis of funding was designed to: a) identify the predominant source(s) of funding used to support professional learning in New Mexico and b) compare New Mexico's use of funds to research-informed best practices and the actions of other states.

Source(s) of Funding

We reviewed an analysis of states' usage of Title II-A funds commissioned by the US Department of Education. We examined the amount of Title II-A funds New Mexico used for professional learning, whether it diverted funding to other title programs, whether funding supported short-term or long-term professional learning approaches, and which educator groups professional learning was provided to at the state and district level. We then compared trends in New Mexico to research-informed best practices.

Title II, Part A of Elementary and Secondary Education funds are the predominant source of funding for professional learning in most states, including New Mexico.¹¹⁹ While other federal funding sources can be used to support professional learning, funding may be restricted to schools or educators serving specific student populations.¹²⁰ Title II-A funds are apportioned to state education agencies (SEA) by formula with a large portion of the funds being distributed to local education agencies. Title II-A funds are typically used to a) increase student academic achievement, b) improve educator quality and effectiveness, c) increase the number of effective educators, and d) provide low-income and minority students with greater access to effective educators. Providing professional learning can be a cross-cutting strategy for those goals. That noted, there are differences in how states and districts prioritize their use of funds. In 2022-2023, SEAs typically utilized state-level Title II-A funding for staffing and program management and oversight functions. Funding is also often used to support the recruitment, hiring, and retention of educators. Comparatively, most LEAs used Title II-A funds to support professional learning.¹²¹

Comparison with Other States

To provide a basis for analyzing New Mexico's use of Title II-A funds and comparing its practices with those of other states, we worked to identify research-informed best practices concerning the effective use of funds to support professional learning. Key practices included:

- Adopting professional learning standards and assessing alignment to those standards as a part of an entity's application for funding and/or registration as an approved professional learning provider within a state.¹²²
- Utilizing funding flexibly to support learning opportunities that reflect the practices of high-quality professional learning.¹²³
- Tying professional learning requirements to educator license/certification renewal.¹²⁴
- Dedicating funding to support professional learning initiatives over the long term.¹²⁵

PROMISING PRACTICE: HIGH QUALITY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING MARKETPLACE

PED provides a marketplace for professional learning related to high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) to assist LEAs in identifying curriculum-based professional learning provider programs that support orientation to and the implementation of HQIM. To be included in the marketplace, potential providers went through an application process through which they were required to demonstrate that their professional learning programs:

- Were relevant to participants' professional context and daily practice
- Provided opportunities to give and receive feedback
- Utilized strategies to actively engage learners
- Are led by skilled facilitators with relevant expertise and a track record of success

PED used this information to vet and recommend potential providers to LEAs to support them in matching high-quality providers with their needs.

The following chart compares New Mexico's implementation of these practices to trends in other states.

Table 3. Focus Group Types

Practice	Trend Type	New Mexico	National Comparison
Adopts standards for professional learning that guides funding	State Trends	Yes, NMAC 6.65.2.10 requires entities that apply for or are awarded state or federal funding to support professional learning programs or activities to demonstrate alignment between the proposed programs and the New Mexico professional learning framework.	At least 35 states have adopted or adapted a version of the Standards for Professional Learning ¹²⁶; whereas, NM has retained an outdated version of the standards.
Provides flexible funding for learning opportunities that utilize high-quality professional learning practices	State Trends	Yes, per ESEA allowances. In 2022 - 23, New Mexico was one of two states that transferred Title II-A funds from Title II-A to other programs. After transfers to other programs, New Mexico had 29% fewer Title II-A funds available at the state level. ¹²⁸	ESEA allows SEAs and LEAs to transfer funding flexibly between other federal formula-funded programs. Only four states did this in 2022 - 23. Two states transferred money from Title II-A; two states transferred money to Title II-A. ¹²⁹
	District Trends	14% of districts transferred funds from Title II-A to another ESEA program. 92% of districts utilized Title II-A funding for professional learning. 51% of the funds available to districts were used for professional learning. ¹³⁰	26% of districts transferred funds out of or into another ESEA program. ¹³¹ 78% of all districts utilized Title II-A funding for professional learning. 57% of funds available to districts were used for professional learning. ¹³²
Ties professional learning requirements to licensure certification renewal	State Trends	Partially met. Rules for teachers seeking licensure renewal do not appear to require them to participate in professional learning to renew a license ¹³³; however, new legislation requires site administrators and superintendents to participate in professional learning to renew their licenses.	44 states tie continuing education requirements to license renewal. ¹³⁴
Dedicates funding to support professional learning initiatives over the long term	State Trends	- NMPED uses five percent of Title II, Part A, administrative costs to support positions within the agency. ¹³⁵ - New Mexico intends to reserve 3% of Title II-A funding to improve administrator retention, evaluation, and professional development. ¹³⁶	38 state education agencies used Title II-A funding to support professional development. On average, 21% of funding was dedicated to professional development activities at the state level. ¹³⁷
	District Trends	Teachers: 55% of districts utilized Title II-A funding to support long-term professional learning. 32% used the funds to support collaborative or job-embedded professional learning. 89% of districts used funding to support short-term professional learning. ¹³⁸ Principals: 37% of districts utilized Title II-A funding to support long-term professional learning. 25% used the funds to support collaborative or job-embedded professional learning opportunities. 83% of districts used Title II-A funding to support short-term professional learning opportunities or conferences. ¹³⁹	Teachers: 72% of districts used Title II-A funds to support long-term professional learning. 43% of districts used funding for collaborative or job-embedded professional learning opportunities. 88% of districts used Title II-A funding to support short-term professional learning for teachers. ¹⁴⁰ Principals: 58% of districts used Title II-A funds to support long-term professional learning. 33% of districts used funding for collaborative or job-embedded professional learning opportunities. 82% of districts used Title II-A funding to support short-term professional learning. ¹⁴¹

Key findings from the funding analysis include:

- Uses outdated standards. New Mexico has adopted professional learning standards, but they are outdated.
- Funds professional learning less than the national average. 92% of New Mexico districts used Title II-A funds for professional learning, 14% higher than the national average, but collectively those districts spent 6% less of their Title II-A funds on professional learning than the national average.
- Funds research-supported professional learning practices less. New Mexican districts direct more Title II-A funding to support short-term professional learning opportunities or conferences than the national average. Even when they prioritize long-term, job-embedded, and collaborative professional learning opportunities, they do so at a lower rate than the national average.
- Funds professional learning for principals less. New Mexican districts prioritize funding professional learning for principals 18% less than they do for teachers. This gap in funding is 4% larger than the national average across districts.

Summary

New Mexico has laid foundational policies to support and scale professional learning, such as:

- Tri-annual evaluation requirements for professional learning programs. Administrative code requires that all statewide, PED, charter schools, and public school district professional learning programs must be evaluated every three years.
- Broad use of Title II-A funds by districts: A higher percentage of New Mexican districts prioritized professional learning as compared to the national average in 2022 - 2023.
- A vetted professional learning marketplace: The PED is making strides to help LEAs select high-quality curriculum-based professional learning opportunities with its High Quality Professional Learning Marketplace.¹⁴²

Yet important challenges remain, including:

- Indeterminate implementation of evaluation requirements and professional learning standards. While administrative code provides a framework for assessing professional learning, it is unclear whether these reviews are implemented tri-annually as stipulated in the administrative code, which bureau or division owns the entirety of this work, and whether there is a means through which PED can systemically assess professional learning statewide.
- Limited attention to priority topics. There are few professional learning opportunities focused on literacy and mathematical instructional practices and instructional strategies for historically marginalized student populations. With the exception of learning opportunities for students with disabilities, no priority area achieved a double-digit percentage of the training topics identified in our sample.
- Predominance of short-term training over sustained, job-embedded learning. There is an imbalance in the type (structure) of professional learning opportunities offered: professional learning providers offer short-term training events at a greater rate than long-term, collaborative, and job-embedded learning.
- Opportunities for deepening a licensure linkage and collective bargaining support. There is mixed implementation of practices that could spur engagement in professional learning in New Mexico statute, administrative code, and collective bargaining practices, including:
 - No linkage between advanced licensure renewal and professional learning requirements for teachers
 - Only 10% of required professional relating to priority topics
 - Limitations on the amount of additional time educators are contractually obligated to engage in professional learning opportunities

Together, these findings point to promising practices that can be scaled and critical areas where policy and implementation must be strengthened to support effective, equitable educator development across the state.

Chapter 3 Endnotes

⁹⁸ The [Martinez/Yazzie ruling](#) requires the Public Education Department and all local education agencies to pay close attention to the needs of historically marginalized student populations, including English language learners, Native American students, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities.

⁹⁹ Manna, P. (2021). [How Can State Policy Support Local School Districts as They Develop Comprehensive and Aligned Principal Pipelines?](#); Sherman et al. (2007). [Soup du Jour and So Much More: A Model for School Leader Preparation](#).

¹⁰⁰ New Mexico Alliance for Teacher Residencies (2023). [The Time is Now: Strengthening New Mexico's Educator Preparation Systems](#).

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² For more information, please see [NMAC 6.60.6.9](#).

¹⁰³ For more information, read the full text of the bill [here](#).

¹⁰⁴ Tooley & White (2018). [Rethinking Licensure: Promoting Professional Learning Through Teacher Licensure Renewal Policies](#).

¹⁰⁵ The Public Education Department maintains a [list of required training and professional development](#)

¹⁰⁶ Notably, the list of learning opportunities also includes training on English Learner Identification Process, the Challenges and Needs of System-Involved Youth, instructional material reviewers, and the state's professional development framework. While the English Learner course may be associated with historically marginalized groups, the opportunity is not required in statute or rule. Additionally, while training on the challenges and needs of system-involved youth may intersect with some historically marginalized or vulnerable populations, it falls outside the scope of those groups prioritized by the Martinez/Yazzie court case and, resultantly, outside of the scope of this study.

¹⁰⁷ Find more information about the professional learning framework in [NMAC 6.65.2](#).

¹⁰⁸ The NSDC was rebranded Learning Forward. The most recent version of [Standards for Professional Learning](#) were released in 2022. A [2021 meta-analysis](#) by the American Institutes for Research suggests that "evidence of program alignment with the Learning Forward professional learning standards was associated with improved teacher instruction and student achievement."

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- ¹⁰⁹ Research suggests that few states vet their professional learning providers or only audit a few providers annually. Understanding the extent to which these evaluations occur and how, if at all, the data is used to inform PED's funding or guidance to professional learning providers and its own professional learning could be useful in informing PED's strategy in providing professional learning in priority areas. Schwartz, S. (2023). [Teacher Professional Development, Explained](#). Tooley & White (2018). [Rethinking Licensure: Promoting Professional Learning Through Teacher Licensure Renewal Policies](#).
- ¹¹⁰ See [Foundations for Standards](#) from Learning Forward.
- ¹¹¹ Schwartz, S. (2023). [Teacher Professional Development, Explained](#). Tooley & White (2018). [Rethinking Licensure: Promoting Professional Learning Through Teacher Licensure Renewal Policies](#).
- ¹¹² NM LEAs are required to submit the Educational Plan (Ed Plan) annually. The plan outlines their school improvement initiatives.
- ¹¹³ See the previous notes about the transition from the NSDC standards to the Learning Forward standards.
- ¹¹⁴ This ranged from 22 additional hours annually to 4 hours per month for any function beyond the normal workday, including professional learning. Some agreements allowed for additional flexible time.
- ¹¹⁵ For more information, please see the NMPED's [Structured Literacy website](#).
- ¹¹⁶ Notably, 29% of directors communicated that their division or bureau did not support core academics but indicated that professional learning offered by their division supported instructional strategies to address the needs of historically marginalized populations. This could point to a deep integration of this focus across PED's work. Alternatively, it could also point to an insufficient understanding of professional learning the topics and structures best suited to address these instructional needs.
- ¹¹⁷ 21% provided services to North Central New Mexico and 14% provided services to Northwest New Mexico.
- ¹¹⁸ The Public Education Department offers the largest number of professional learning opportunities among the entities reviewed. However, this metric is not a measure of how often the districts and individual educators use those opportunities. Most of these professional learning opportunities are directly offered by PED. In a few cases, some are offered via a co-branded partnership between PED and another entity.
- ¹¹⁹ That noted, PED division and bureau directors noted that their unit's professional learning efforts were also supported by funds from the United States Department of Education (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and State Personnel Development Grants) Centers for Disease Control, and United States Department of Agriculture.
- ¹²⁰ Besides Title II-A funding, states and districts can also access a variety of federal funds for professional learning from sources intended to support distinct school types and/or student populations, including:
- Title I Part A, C, and D funds for schools and districts where at least 40% of the student population come from families experiencing low income.
 - Title III for professional learning targeted at increasing the English language proficiency of English Language Learners and immigrants.
 - Title IV, Part A | Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants focused on the use of data and technology, academic assessments, career and technical education, and family and community engagement.
 - Title IV, Part B | 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grants targeted enrichment programs during non-school hours. Five percent of the award must be reserved for professional learning.
 - Title V, Part B | Rural Education Achievement Program provides rural and small schools with additional funds for activities covered by Title I-A, Title II-A, Title III, and Title IV-A and -B.
 - Title VI | Impact Aid provides LEAs serving federally connected children on military bases, Indian lands, and subsidized housing with additional funds that they can use at their discretion, including for professional learning.
 - McKinney-Vento Homeless Act provides funding to support services to homeless children and youth, including professional learning.
 - Carl D. Perkins Act provides funding to support Career Technical Education (CTE) programs, including professional learning for educators.
 - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B provides for professional learning directly tied to special education services.
- ¹²¹ Westat (2024). [State and District Use of Title II, Part A Funds in 2022-23](#).
- ¹²² Darling-Hammond et al. (2017). [Effective Teacher Professional Development](#).
- ¹²³ Ibid.
- ¹²⁴ Ibid.
- ¹²⁵ Southern Regional Education Board (n.d.). [Professional Learning](#).
- ¹²⁶ See [Foundations for Standards](#) from Learning Forward.
- ¹²⁷ We have been unable to determine which program(s) these funds were transferred to; as such we cannot determine whether this transfer was used to support high-quality professional learning.
- ¹²⁸ Westat (2024). [State and District Use of Title II, Part A Funds in 2022-23](#).
- ¹²⁹ Ibid.
- ¹³⁰ Ibid.
- ¹³¹ Most transferring funds out of Title II-A and into Title I-A (low-income schools or Title V-B (rural schools). For more information, see Westat's [State and District Use of Title II, Part A Funds in 2022-23](#).
- ¹³² Westat (2024). [State and District Use of Title II, Part A Funds in 2022-23](#).
- ¹³³ Teachers seeking to advance to the next license must engage in the professional learning outlined in NMAC [6.60.6](#)
- ¹³⁴ Tooley & White (2018). [Rethinking Licensure: Promoting Professional Learning Through Teacher Licensure Renewal Policies](#).
- ¹³⁵ These funds are allocated for program managers who provide technical support (guidance, training, communities of practice, etc.) and ensure accountability (review Requests for Reimbursement, approval of applications, approval of budgets, etc.) of Title II, Part A, flowthrough funds to LEAs. In addition, these funds are utilized for positions which support the teacher and site administrator evaluation systems.
- ¹³⁶ See [Title II, Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction](#). PED expects to braid Title II-A funding with other funding to pursue these strategies.
- ¹³⁷ Westat (2024). [State and District Use of Title II, Part A Funds in 2022-23](#).
- ¹³⁸ Ibid.
- ¹³⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ¹⁴¹ Ibid.
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CHAPTER 4: EDUCATOR PERSPECTIVES

High-quality professional learning is a cornerstone of effective teaching and improved student outcomes. Understanding how educators experience and perceive professional learning—both in terms of its structure and content—is essential for designing systems that are responsive, equitable, and impactful. This chapter presents a comprehensive synthesis of New Mexico educators' perspectives on professional learning, grounded in robust mixed-methods data collection.

We asked educators the following:

- What types of professional learning have current PreK-12 educators experienced?
- Which professional learning experiences do educators find most valuable, and what additional types of professional learning would they like to see offered?
- In what ways has professional learning influenced educators' instructional practices and student outcomes?
- How do professional learning experiences vary based on factors such as teaching experience, licensure type, region, school type, grade level, and setting?
- What perspectives do aspiring educators (e.g., high school and teacher candidates in college programs) have about the kinds of professional learning teachers need?

Data Collection Methods

Two complementary data collection strategies were employed to examine educators' perceptions of their professional learning: a statewide survey and a series of educator focus groups.

Survey: An online survey served as the primary quantitative instrument. All licensed PreK-12 teachers in New Mexico public schools comprised the sampling frame. The LANL Foundation and its education partners disseminated the survey link via multiple channels, including organizational email lists, newsletters, and social media platforms, to maximize coverage and participation. A total of 2,031 teachers completed the survey, representing a diverse cross-section of educators across grade levels, licensure levels, geographic regions, and school types. New Mexico has approximately 21,000 public school teachers.

Focus Groups and Interviews: To deepen and contextualize survey findings, ten semi-structured focus groups were conducted with teachers, principals, district leaders, and aspiring educators. Purposive sampling was used to ensure variation across school types, regions, and professional roles. Table 4 provides the distribution of participants by group type. In addition, two key informant interviews were conducted with administrators from a large urban district to capture district-level perspectives that could not be addressed through a focus group.

Table 4. Focus Group Types

Teachers	Principals & District Leaders	Aspiring Educators
Northern New Mexico Charter School (4)	Northern New Mexico Principals (3)	EdRising Program High School Students (2 students)
Northern New Mexico Traditional (3)	Statewide Principal (6)	Golden Apple Scholars College Students (4 students)
Northern New Mexico (1)	Statewide District Leaders (2)	
Statewide Elementary (3)		
Statewide Secondary (2)		

Data Analysis

Qualitative data from focus groups and interviews were analyzed following a framework that consisted of three concurrent activities: data condensation (organizing and simplifying the raw data), data display (organizing data into comparison tables), and conclusion verification.¹⁴³

Coding Procedures: Transcripts were subjected to first-cycle coding to capture salient words, phrases, and concepts from participants' responses. Descriptive and in vivo codes were applied to remain close to participants' language and meanings. During second-cycle coding, pattern codes were developed to cluster related first-cycle codes into broader categories. This process facilitated the identification of underlying patterns across groups and roles.

Data Displays and Thematic Development: Codes and categories were organized into data matrices (i.e., comparison tables) that allowed the research team to examine similarities and differences across participants. These tables made it possible to compare themes both within individual focus groups and across educator roles. Themes were developed iteratively through analytic memo writing, team discussions, and ongoing comparison of coded segments with emerging conceptual categories.

Trustworthiness and Rigor: Multiple strategies were employed to enhance the credibility and dependability of the findings. These included analyst triangulation (with multiple researchers coding and comparing interpretations), maintaining a record of analytic decisions, and actively seeking disconfirming evidence during the coding process. Regular peer debriefing sessions were conducted to test interpretations and guard against researcher bias.

Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions and cross-tabulations, to examine variation across demographic and professional subgroups.

Ethical Considerations

All data collection procedures adhered to established ethical principles of social science research. Participation in both the survey and focus groups was voluntary, and all participants provided informed consent prior to participation. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and no identifying information has been reported in this analysis. Focus group participants were reminded to respect the confidentiality of peer comments shared during discussions. Data were stored securely, accessible only to the research team, and used exclusively for research purposes.

Considerations of Bias and Limitations

Several methodological limitations warrant acknowledgment. Convenience bias may have influenced survey participation, as teachers with strong positive or negative views of professional learning may have been more motivated to respond. Nonresponse bias is also a concern, as teachers who were overextended in their family and work lives or disengaged from professional learning may have opted out, potentially leading to underrepresentation of certain perspectives. Additionally, social desirability bias may have shaped responses to questions about district- or state-sponsored professional learning. Despite these limitations, the combination of a large, diverse survey sample and purposively sampled focus groups strengthens the credibility and transferability of the findings by allowing for both breadth and depth of understanding.

Structures, Content, and Priorities of Professional Learning in New Mexico

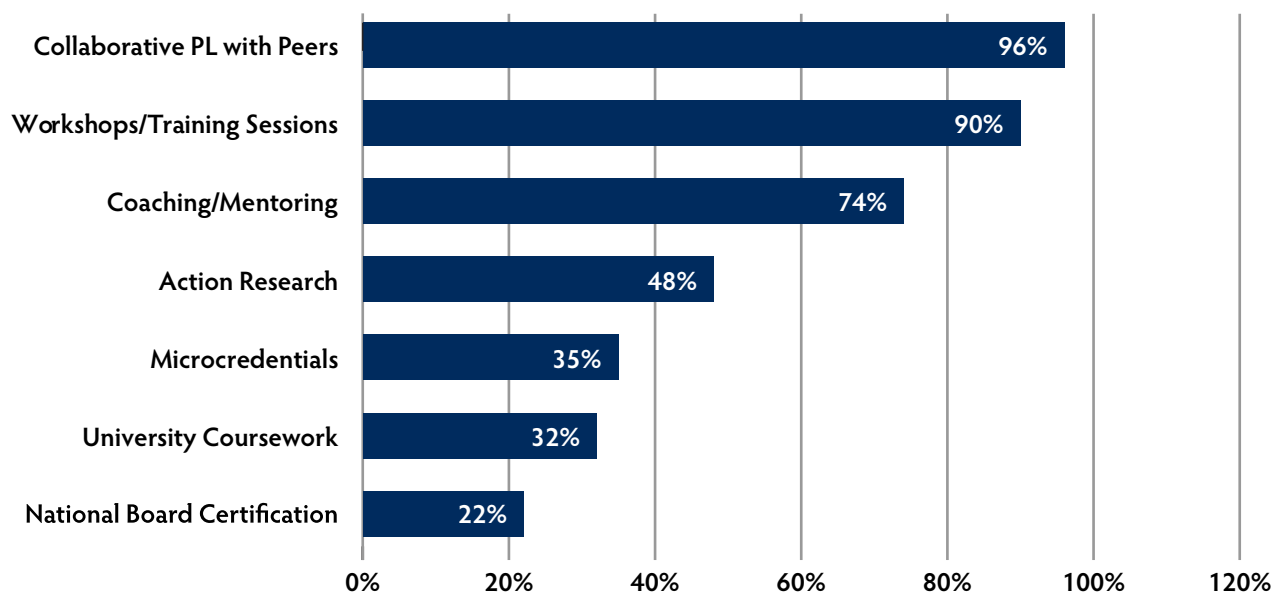
PreK-12 educators across the state reported a range of professional learning opportunities, varying in both structure and content.

Professional Learning Structures

Among the available structures, collaborative learning with other teachers was identified as the most common and most frequently used approach. This includes activities such as co-planning, peer observation, and PLCs—structures that foster sustained, job-embedded growth through collective inquiry and reflection. Workshops or training sessions were the second most common structure, though they tended to occur less frequently and were often described as one-time or introductory events. Coaching or mentoring ranked third in prevalence, with its frequency varying significantly by district and tenure. Many educators noted that coaching was more often directed toward early-career teachers, suggesting a focus on induction and onboarding supports. Other structures—such as action research, microcredentials, university coursework, and National Board Certification—were much less common. Fewer than half of teachers statewide reported participating in these more intensive or individualized forms of professional learning, indicating potential areas for expansion or targeted investment. Figure 3 lists the percent of teachers who reported engaging in these professional learning structures.

During collaborative time with colleagues, teachers reported engaging in a range of instructional and planning activities that directly support teaching and learning. The most frequently cited activities included discussing instructional strategies aligned

Figure 3: Professional Learning Structure Participation Rates



with their content areas (89%), analyzing formative and summative assessment data (84%), addressing student behavioral concerns (83%), reviewing student work (82%), and preparing for upcoming lessons (81%). Additionally, a significant portion of teachers (75%) focused on adapting existing English Language Arts, mathematics, and science curricula to better meet student needs. Administrative matters were also addressed during collaboration time by 73% of respondents.

Professional Learning Topics

Analysis of statewide professional learning data reveals that New Mexico teachers are most frequently engaged in learning experiences that focus on data-driven instruction (84%), social emotional learning (81%), differentiated and inclusive instructional practices (80%), and formative/summative assessment practices (79%). These topics reflect a strong emphasis on supporting whole-child learning and instructional responsiveness. Notably, over three-quarters of teachers also reported professional learning in culturally responsive and sustaining instruction (76%) and structured literacy instruction (76%), signaling alignment with state-level priorities around equity, foundational literacy, and instructional improvement.

In contrast, engagement with other content areas remains notably lower. Fewer than 60% of teachers reported any professional learning in: arts instruction (34%), social studies instruction (42%), STEM instruction (52%), trauma-informed instruction (58%), or math instruction (59%). When teachers did engage in these areas, the frequency was generally limited—fewer than one-third of teachers spent time on these topics more than five times in a six-month span, suggesting most participated only once or twice. This gap may point to areas where instructional priorities are underrepresented in ongoing professional learning systems and may benefit from more sustained attention and coordinated, systemic support. Table 5 lists the most and least frequent topic areas.

Connections Between Structures and Topics

Focus group data suggest that certain structures were more likely to address certain topics. These data also suggest that each type varied in implementation quality, frequency, and teacher autonomy.

State-Level Workshops: Large-scale professional learning sessions, typically led by state education agencies or external providers, were often designed to support statewide or district-wide initiatives such as structured literacy, standards-based grading, or the rollout of new curricula. These sessions were usually one-time events, broadly attended, and focused on state and district priorities rather than school- or teacher-specific needs. Respondents often found these one-size-fits-all sessions to be misaligned to their needs. Teachers were often required to attend sessions unrelated to the subjects they teach or to attend sessions for which they already had expertise.

"There are things that come down from the state that are required...that maybe aren't all that meaningful in terms of the training itself, or the way it's delivered." — District Leader, Urban School District

School-Based Professional Days: Teachers had varying levels of access to professional learning days. Some teachers reported having no time dedicated to professional learning, others only reported having limited professional learning days scheduled

Table 5. Most & Least Frequent Professional Learning Topic Areas

Most Frequent Topic Areas	Percent
Data-driven instruction	84%
Social-emotional learning practices	81%
Differentiated and inclusive instruction	80%
Formative and summative assessment practices	79%
Culturally responsive and sustaining instruction	76%
Structured literacy instruction	76%
Least Frequent Topic Areas	Percent
Arts instruction	34%
Social Studies instruction	42%
STEM instruction	52%
Trauma-informed instruction	58%
Math instruction	59%

for a few days a year (e.g., beginning of the school year, mid-year, and end-of year), or the time to meet is inadequate (e.g., 20 minutes, once a week, before school). Meanwhile, others had districts that offered more consistently scheduled professional learning time into the school days over the course of the year. In Albuquerque, for example, some schools have extended-day funding that pays teachers to come to school an hour before students, allowing them to meet collaboratively every day and embed professional learning into that time. Teacher reports varied with regard to the extent to which professional learning days met their needs. In some schools, topics were shaped by district priorities or selected by administrators, often superseding the teachers' professional learning goals. Several teachers described many professional learning days as being focused on compliance, procedural updates, or logistical issues, which they felt wasted valuable instructional planning time. These professional learning days also focused on learning about newly adopted curricula or technology platforms. But the professional

learning did not always focus on how to use these new materials to engage learners and improve learning. Some also said that the content of the professional learning days wasn't aligned with their subject area, student needs, years of teaching experience, or current challenges. This is problematic when, for instance, a new or alternative-licensed teacher does not have the foundational knowledge to understand the content. Or the content is not at a level to grow the professional learning needs of more advanced teachers.

In other schools, teachers had opportunities to provide input—often through surveys or feedback tools—on the focus of their professional learning. However, many teachers noted a lack of transparency about how topics were chosen or who designed the learning, leading to mixed perceptions of relevance and ownership. Oftentimes, teachers said that district administration did not communicate the purpose of the goals and professional learning and how it related to improving teaching and learning goals in their district. These teachers said that there did not seem to be a sustained cohesive plan for professional learning over the course of the year. Teachers described district-led professional learning as starting strong with a new topic but quickly losing momentum. Support fades over time, and the district often shifts to a new focus without following up on the quality of implementation or sustainability of the previous one.

"Some things have been on new technology that we received...and so a lot of it has been in response to either new tech directives or things we have to do like the Professional Development Plan...We have a consulting group that comes in and does our test security...another thing we do under the guise of professional development." — **Charter School Teacher**

"They try to throw in extra professional developments in the middle of the year...it's not what we asked for, it's what they feel like we need." — **Elementary teacher, Urban School District**

"...most of our professional learnings, they hit hard, with so many sessions, and then it just sort of dwindles out. But, you're expected to keep going, but you're not sure how to keep going because you don't get additional support on that." — **Elementary teacher, Urban School District**

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): Team-based collaborative learning structures, such as PLCs, were among the most widely used and well-liked models across the state. The quality of PLC implementation, however, varied significantly. In high-functioning PLCs, teams sustained a focused inquiry on instructional improvement, used student data to guide decisions, and maintained consistency in their work overtime. In other settings, PLCs shifted topics frequently, lacked a clear purpose or data focus, and offered limited teacher voice in decision-making.

While universally praised as opportunities for collaboration, the actual depth and structure of PLCs varied significantly depending on school size and scheduling flexibility.

"We couldn't wrap our heads around how to PLC, because there's one science teacher, one English teacher. We finally found space to divide into humanities and STEM...The practice of PLC has helped us hone in on our professional learning goals...It's on a deeper level." — **Charter school teacher**

Coaching and Mentoring: Coaching and mentoring were widely viewed as high-impact supports for teacher growth, especially for novice and early-career educators. It was also highlighted as critical for rural, charter, and tribal schools where teachers often operate in isolated environments or small departments. Other professional learning (e.g., formal or informal) for these schools has been beneficial because smaller teams can lead to stronger collegial collaboration and are locally tailored to their unique student needs. Coaching and mentoring capitalized on those benefits of smaller, isolated schools. Participants emphasized that coaching was most effective when embedded in the school day and delivered through a formal, structured program with trained coaches or school leaders. Scheduled, consistent coaching sessions that focused on classroom practice and instructional goals were seen as particularly beneficial.

"...Our main coach's title is actually Educator Resilience Coordinator, which I kind of love, because we do need resilience. And, she's had a great effect on a lot of teachers." — **Rural Charter School Teacher**

"When my teachers receive personalized coaching, engage in peer observations, and apply research-based practices with follow-up, this has really been very, very effective. Both instructional skills and student outcomes improve significantly." — **Principal, Charter School**

"We have been building coaching structures for our small schools. It's one of the most impactful levers we have. When we have a strong coach in place—someone who builds trust and focuses on instruction—we see improvement not only in teaching but teacher retention too." — **Principal, Charter School**

Individualized Professional Learning: Many teachers reported having autonomy to pursue professional learning aligned with their personal interests and goals. In the survey, 54% of teachers said they can decide what professional learning experiences they engage in, 55% said they can easily find the professional learning they need and 75% said they participate in professional learning opportunities that are not required. Teachers in the focus groups said that, in supportive districts, teachers received funding and approval to attend external workshops or conferences. District and school leaders said that teacher choice is important, but adult learning practices and alignment with school goals should be considered.

"Choice matters. Teachers want professional learning that reflects their needs, not a checkbox. But we're still figuring out how to balance that with system goals." — **District Leader, Urban School**

Others independently sought professional learning through scholarships, stipends, or out-of-school time opportunities to fill gaps in professional learning that the district or school does not offer. They said that they proactively sought out professional learning that aligned with the needs of their students, fit their schedule, or addressed professional learning in their subject matter. In particular, teachers in non-core subject areas—such as the arts, music, and technology—often had to take the initiative to find relevant professional learning, as districts did not always offer content-specific opportunities for these disciplines.

"I've been doing some arts integration that [district] offers through the Kennedy Center, which is fabulous—how to bring in, whether it's acting, poetry, writing into the classroom...I've been really enjoying all of them so far." — **Elementary School Teacher, Urban School**

Educator Perceptions of Professional Learning: Mixed Experiences and Strong Demand for Improvement

Survey results show wide variation in how teachers perceive their professional learning experiences. A substantial number of educators reported dissatisfaction: 32% were dissatisfied with the quantity of professional learning available, and 35% were dissatisfied with the quality. Notably, 43% of teachers said that most of their professional learning experiences felt like a waste of time, highlighting the urgent need to redesign professional learning to be more relevant, practical, and impactful.

At the same time, a modest majority of teachers reported positive outcomes from professional learning. Between 62% and 69% of respondents indicated that professional learning has led to meaningful improvements in their instructional practice and student outcomes. Specifically, teachers said professional learning helped them enhance instruction (67%), meet student needs more effectively (69%), deliver more culturally responsive and sustaining instruction (62%), and achieve lasting improvements in student learning (62%). 63% also said their professional learning was relevant to their specific teaching context, suggesting that when professional learning is well aligned with classroom realities, it can be impactful. Table 6 displays the positive outcomes teachers reported.

Teachers overwhelmingly affirm the value of high-quality professional learning and support increased investment. Over 80% of respondents agreed that professional learning is an essential part of their role and that they would welcome more opportunities—as long as those experiences are useful and embedded in their day-to-day work. Three-quarters (75%) believe New Mexico should invest more in teachers' professional learning. Teachers emphasized that effective professional learning is not "one size fits all" but must be tailored to individual needs, directly applicable to practice, and include meaningful follow-up to support implementation.

Table 6. Positive Outcomes from Professional Learning

	Percent
Deliver more culturally responsive and sustaining instruction	62%
Achieve lasting improvements in student learning	62%
Enhance instruction	67%
Meet student needs more effectively	69%

"The state could provide professional learning for teachers, by allocating more resources...that's by funding substitutes, coaching, and mentoring. And also, I think they should revise licensure requirements to emphasize ongoing professional learning rather than relying solely on credit hours or seat time." — **Principal, Urban School**

In focus groups with teachers and leaders, there were strong professional learning practices occurring in schools throughout the state that could be models to improve professional learning at scale. For instance, in regard to engaging school leaders in teacher professional learning, several leaders, especially those in smaller schools, said they attended teacher professional learning and facilitated it. Leaders in charter schools with more autonomy also had strong leader engagement in professional learning. Some school leaders said that their districts provided professional learning to build their leadership capacity to facilitate professional learning in their schools by offering training on observation and feedback cycles and how to provide actionable feedback. Outside of district-provided professional learning, these leaders described engaging in coaching fellowships and state-led professional learning offered by the Priority Schools Bureau to learn effective coaching techniques. However, other leaders, particularly those in smaller charter schools, said they had to seek out their own professional learning.

"Since I'm the director of a charter school...the only professional development that I receive as a principal is what I go out and get based on offerings by PED or some other entity. But [from] the district, I don't [get] any professional learning." — **District/School Leader, Charter School**

Districts were strategically funding and providing coaches for their teachers. Sometimes the districts were able to hire a coach for the schools, or when there was no funding for a qualified educator in the community to serve as a coach, the district or school leader is the coach.

Several teachers mentioned high functioning PLCs that were focused on context-specific professional learning sustained over time and offered a chance for strong professional learning.

"We meet weekly and go through data, look at student work. It's our PLC time, but it doesn't feel like a meeting. It's where the real learning happens. I leave with something I can use the next day." — **Elementary School Teacher**

Teachers expressed strong interest in future professional learning that enhances their instructional effectiveness and responsiveness to student needs. Table 7 includes the priority areas.

These priorities reflect a broad commitment to equity, engagement, and evidence-based instruction across diverse student populations.

Findings from focus groups and open-ended survey responses point to several systemic factors that contribute to the inconsistent experiences teachers report with professional learning. These issues fall into two primary categories: access disparities and variability in quality and relevance.

Variability in Access to Professional Learning

Teachers’ access to high-quality professional learning varies significantly across school and district contexts. Educators in larger or better-resourced districts typically have greater access to robust professional learning structures, including in-house coaching and locally available training. In contrast, educators in smaller, rural, and tribal schools face persistent access barriers:

- **Limited availability of local group learning opportunities**, often requiring teachers to travel long distances—sometimes several hours—to attend sessions.
- **Inadequate access to specialized coaching or mentoring**, especially for subject-specific or culturally responsive support.
- **Greater reliance on external networks**, such as professional associations or online platforms to meet their learning needs.
- **Limited time for professional learning**, with professional learning frequently being crammed into already packed schedules, competing with critical planning, collaboration, and student-focused work.

Variability in Quality and Relevance of Professional Learning Experiences

Even when professional learning is accessible, its quality and alignment to teacher needs are highly variable. Many educators reported that some experiences were valuable and impactful, while others felt disconnected from their roles, responsibilities, and students.

Common misalignments include:

- **Grade level mismatch**, such as secondary school teachers receiving training designed for lower grades.
- **Content area mismatch**, such as science or music teachers attending literacy-focused sessions with no explicit relevance to their instructional context.
- **Cultural mismatch**, particularly a lack of culturally responsive professional learning for teachers serving Native American or other historically underserved student populations.
- **Career state mismatch**, especially for advanced career teachers who said they were receiving professional learning for foundational level topics they had already mastered.

“A lot of times they lump us together...it’s not even been content very much...more what I would categorize as teacher prep and strategies.” — Middle School Teacher

Even though I had two master’s degrees, I still had to do another training. It was a bummer because of the time and money.” — Elementary School Teacher

“It feels like the professional learning is for someone else’s classroom. It doesn’t speak to the culture of our school or our community.” — Elementary School Teacher

“There hasn’t been a lot of culturally responsive trainings that I can remember. We have Native kids, but we’re not doing much that really helps us understand how to connect with them culturally.” — Traditional School Teacher

Table 7. Priority Topic Areas Needed in Future Professional Learning

	Percent
Instructional practices with students with disabilities	63%
Differentiated and inclusive instructional approaches	61%
Strategies for teaching multi-language learners	60%
Integrating technology into instruction	56%
Trauma-informed instructional practices	56%
Culturally responsive, relevant, and sustaining pedagogy	55%
Classroom management and addressing student behavior	54%
Structured literacy practices	51%
Social-emotional learning strategies	51%

Teachers emphasized a strong desire for greater autonomy in selecting professional learning that aligns with their subject area, student demographics, and personal professional growth goals. Common educator concerns included:

- **Lack of choice** in district-mandated professional learning.
- **Generic, one-size-fits-all content** that fails to address the specific needs of specialized disciplines such as STEM, arts, or tribal education.
- **Overly prescriptive PLC structures**, including mandated agendas and micromanaged collaboration time, which reduce professional agency and limits meaningful instructional inquiry.

"...the building does say that you have to meet every Tuesday and Thursday in a PLC group, and it sounds wonderful because we have that structured time. But what isn't wonderful is when you show up thinking you have time to plan as a team, and there's already documents waiting for us to address...I wish it was left to more of our autonomy so we could really plan as a team." — Traditional School Teacher

These insights underscore the importance of designing professional learning systems that are not only accessible and equitable, but also differentiated, context-responsive, and grounded in educator voice. Tailoring professional learning to better reflect the realities of teachers' classrooms and communities is essential to increasing both its perceived value and its long-term instructional impact.

Factors that Enable or Hinder High-Quality Professional Learning

What Teachers Value

Teacher feedback highlights a set of clearly defined priorities for future professional learning. Educators consistently express a desire for professional learning that is relevant, actionable, and tailored to their needs. Specifically, teachers value opportunities that focus on specific content areas, technology integration, and social emotional learning—with the latter emphasized particularly by elementary educators. Effective professional learning is most appreciated when it is connected to teachers' real-world classroom and school contexts, promotes collaborative learning with peers, and includes strategies for behavior and classroom management, especially for early-career teachers. Many experienced educators also expressed interest in taking a more active role in leading professional learning. Additionally, tribal school teachers and aspiring educators emphasized the importance of PL that supports culturally responsive and sustaining practices, while hands-on, in-person learning experiences were widely seen as more impactful than virtual alternatives.

Challenges

Despite these clear preferences, several systemic barriers limit the effectiveness of professional learning. Teachers cited concerns with top-down, compliance-driven approaches that lack teacher voice and choice. Time constraints, workload pressures, and a disconnect between available professional learning offerings and actual teacher needs further hinder meaningful engagement. Resource disparities across schools and districts also shape access to quality professional learning. In some cases, even well-intentioned models—such as PLCs—fall short due to inconsistent implementation or insufficient support. Finally, the capacity of school and district leaders to design, facilitate, and sustain impactful professional learning remains a critical factor in determining its overall success.

Variation in Perspectives Across Different Types of Educators and School Contexts

This section presents the findings of the comparative analyses of educator perspectives on the following educator and school characteristics:

- Teachers' years of experience (Novice vs Veteran)
- License type (Alternative, Level I, Level II & Level III, and Waiver/Intern/Substitute)
- Region (Northern New Mexico schools vs Statewide)
- School Type (Traditional, Charter, Tribal)
- Grade Level (Elementary vs Secondary)
- Urbanicity (Rural, Urban, Suburban)

Finally, we present the findings of the focus groups with district and school leaders, as well as the discussions with aspiring educators in the state's EdRising and Golden Apple programs.

License Type

Professional learning needs vary notably by licensure type, reflecting differences in experience and preparation. Teachers holding an Alternative License reported the greatest need for foundational support, with 72% identifying classroom management, 63% trauma-informed instruction, and 61% social-emotional learning as priority areas—at rates higher than other licensure groups. Similarly, Level I teachers expressed strong needs in classroom management (63%) and trauma-informed practices (61%), signaling the importance of targeted induction supports.

Teachers with Waiver, Intern, or Substitute licenses also reported a need for foundational pedagogical skills, underscoring the urgency of early-career development opportunities for those entering the profession through non-traditional pathways.

In contrast, Level II and Level III teachers—who typically have more experience and formal preparation—expressed a need for more advanced, content-specific professional learning. Their top priorities included instructional practices for students with disabilities (62%), strategies for teaching multi-language learners (60%), and differentiated and inclusive instructional practices (60%). These findings highlight the need for differentiated professional learning systems that align to educators' developmental stages and instructional contexts.

Novice vs. Veteran Teachers

Survey and focus group data reveal notable differences in professional learning needs and experiences based on teachers' years of experience.

Novice Teachers (0-3 Years): New and early-career teachers reported the greatest need for professional learning in classroom management (67%), differentiated and inclusive instruction (67%), trauma-informed instructional practices (62%), and social-emotional learning (SEL) (60%). They were also the most likely to report access to coaching or mentoring. Approximately 65% of new teachers indicated they met with a coach or mentor weekly or at least 1–3 times per month, compared to only 40% of their more experienced peers.

Mid-Career Teachers (4-10 Years): Mid-career teachers expressed strong interest in professional learning focused on differentiated and inclusive instructional strategies (66%), effective strategies for multi-language learners (64%), classroom management (62%), trauma-informed practices (60%), and integrating technology into instruction (60%). They also voiced a need for more in-depth professional development aligned with their specific content areas and grade-level responsibilities.

Advanced Veteran Teachers (10+ Years): Teachers with over a decade of experience expressed the highest levels of dissatisfaction with their professional learning experiences. Many felt the content was redundant and not tailored to their expertise. Instead of receiving basic-level professional learning, they indicated a desire to serve as mentors, instructional coaches, or facilitators for less experienced colleagues.

Advanced career teachers reported engaging in the least amount of professional learning across all major topic areas—content knowledge, instructional strategies, and assessment practices. However, they still reported a clear need for additional support, particularly in instructional practices for special education (61%).

Northern vs. Statewide Teachers

Teachers in Northern New Mexico reported greater challenges accessing professional learning opportunities, largely due to the region's rural, geographically isolated context. Extended travel times to attend in-person professional learning created logistical barriers and imposed additional costs on both educators and districts, including expenses related to fuel, lodging, per diem, and securing substitute coverage.

Educators in this region placed a stronger emphasis on the need for culturally responsive and sustaining teaching practices (58%) compared to their counterparts statewide. While survey data revealed only modest differences, focus group discussions reflected a deeper, more explicit prioritization of this need. Similarly, classroom and behavior management (56%) emerged as higher-priority topics in Northern New Mexico focus groups.

"We are seeing more and more behavioral issues—students who are dealing with trauma, or who don't respond to traditional discipline. But, we haven't gotten the training we need to handle this."

— Traditional Northern New Mexico Teacher

Demographic differences among respondents may help explain these variations. Based on survey responses, Northern New Mexico had a slightly higher proportion of teachers holding Alternative or Level I licenses (23% vs. 19%) and a marginally greater share of novice teachers (18% vs. 15%). These groups typically report stronger needs for foundational professional learning, which may contribute to the elevated emphasis on classroom management and inclusive instructional strategies in the region.

Overall, teachers in Northern New Mexico were aligned with their peers across the state on most aspects of professional learning, but the regional context—marked by isolation and a higher concentration of early-career educators responding to the survey—contributes to unique access challenges and slightly differentiated priorities. These findings point to the importance of tailoring professional learning systems to meet the specific needs of rural educators, particularly through strategies that reduce participation barriers and support culturally responsive practice.

Rural, Suburban, and Urban Teachers

Across all settings, teachers emphasized the importance of professional learning focused on differentiated and inclusive instructional practices, with this need being especially pronounced among rural educators.

- **Rural Teachers** reported receiving less professional learning in math instruction (56%) compared to their suburban and urban counterparts. They also placed a high value on professional learning that supports the effective use of technology to engage students (69%) and enhance learning.
- **Suburban Teachers** echoed the rural perspective on the importance of technology integration (74%) and emphasized the need for professional learning that is relevant to their instructional context.
- **Urban and Suburban Teachers** reported receiving less professional learning on trauma-informed practices (58%)—critical as they face increasing student behavioral and mental health challenges. Urban teachers, in particular, cited limited access to professional learning on classroom management (74%) and instructional strategies tailored to multi-language learners (72%).

Focus group data revealed some similarities and differences in professional learning experiences depending on school location.

- **Rural Educators** voiced a strong need for more culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies in their professional learning. They also highlighted logistical barriers, including limited access to in-person professional learning opportunities and excessive travel distances to attend high-quality sessions. Teachers from small rural schools expressed a desire for collaborative learning experiences with peers in similar grade levels or subject areas, which they often lack locally.

"I wish we had more opportunities to collaborate with teachers from other districts or even just different grade levels. Sometimes it feels like we're in a bubble." — **Elementary School Teacher, Rural District**

- **Urban Teachers** expressed greater frustration with top-down, compliance-oriented professional learning that did not reflect the specific needs of their classrooms or align with their individual professional growth goals.

"Sometimes I think they choose Professional Learning because they have a contract. It's not because it helps us in the classroom." — **Middle School Teacher, Urban District**

School Type (Traditional, Charter, Tribal)

Teachers in tribal schools identified a strong need for additional professional learning focused on culturally responsive and sustaining teaching practices (64%), emphasizing the importance of aligning instruction with students' cultural contexts and community values.

Compared to their peers in traditional public schools, both charter and tribal school teachers reported greater needs for professional learning in several key instructional areas, including social-emotional learning (SEL) (65%), formative and summative assessment practices (59%), STEM instruction (58%), math instruction (56%), and data-driven instruction (55%). These findings suggest a broader desire among these educators for content-specific and student-centered instructional improvement.

Charter schools, which typically operate with greater autonomy, were more likely to implement localized professional learning tailored to the specific needs of their students and staff. Charter school leaders played a more active role in the design and facilitation of professional learning allowing for greater alignment with school-level priorities and teacher input.

In contrast, teachers in traditional public schools frequently expressed frustration with professional learning that was mandated in a top-down manner by state or district authorities. They described these experiences as often disconnected from classroom realities and lacking relevance to their immediate instructional needs. These findings point to the value of localized decision-making and teacher voice in the planning and delivery of professional learning.

Elementary vs. Secondary Teachers

Findings from both survey and focus group data reveal distinct professional learning priorities across grade levels.

Elementary Teachers: Elementary educators consistently identified a strong need for professional learning focused on differentiated and inclusive instruction (64%), differentiated instructional strategies (64%), math instruction (60%), STEM instruction (58%), and structured literacy instruction (55%). Survey data also highlighted a need for greater support in social-emotional learning (SEL) (54%), and trauma-informed instruction (59%). In the focus group, elementary teachers noted a need for inquiry-based science practices.

"There's very little that's focused on helping us differentiate when we have three reading levels in the same room."

— **Elementary Teacher, Rural School**

"I don't feel confident teaching math the way they want us to now. The curriculum changed, but we didn't get training on the new strategies." — **Elementary Teacher, District School**

Middle School/Junior High Teachers: Junior high teachers emphasized a need for enhanced training in classroom and behavior management strategies, as surfaced primarily through focus groups. In addition, they expressed a desire for deeper support in implementing data-driven instruction, advancing content-specific pedagogy, increasing academic rigor, and supporting student engagement and interventions for struggling learners. Survey data also reported needing more professional learning in instructional practices for special education (64%), instructional strategies for multi-language learners (60%), differentiated and inclusive instruction (63%), and integrating technology into instruction for student engagement (59%).

"They had us do safety training but not a whole lot about how to manage a class when kids are acting out."

— **Middle School Teacher, District School**

"Some kids are so behind and we're expected to just teach the grade-level stuff. We need more help with interventions."

— **Middle School Teacher, District School**

High School Teachers: High school educators echoed middle school/junior high colleagues in prioritizing professional learning on data-driven instruction, academic rigor, and content-specific instructional strategies. They also highlighted a need for professional learning focused on improving student engagement and addressing the diverse needs of learners. In the survey, high school teachers indicated a greater need for professional learning on instructional practices for special education (64%), instructional strategies for multi-language learners (61%), and differentiated and inclusive instruction (60%).

"There's this push to make everything more rigorous, but no one really defines what that means. How do I make it rigorous for a kid who reads at a fifth-grade level?" — **High School ELA Teacher, District School**

"As a math teacher, I want professional learning that helps me teach math—not just generic strategies. I'm tired of sitting through reading strategies I can't apply." — **High School Math Teacher, District School**

Shared Needs Across Grade Spans: Across all levels—elementary, junior high, and high school—teachers expressed strong interest in professional learning that supports the integration of technology as a means to increase student engagement. Survey data showed alignment across grade spans regarding the need for targeted professional learning on inclusive instructional practices, particularly those that address the needs of students with disabilities, multi-language learners, and the implementation of differentiated instruction.

District and School Leaders

District and school leaders were asked to share their perspectives on teachers' professional learning in their schools. They overwhelmingly support teacher professional learning models that are embedded in the daily fabric of teaching, such as PLCs, instructional coaching, collaborative planning, and shared goal-setting. These approaches are seen as essential for fostering collective responsibility and driving sustained improvements in student outcomes. However, leaders also identified significant structural challenges—particularly time constraints and competing priorities—that often limit the consistent implementation of these embedded models.

"In my experience, the most effective professional learning for teachers is teacher-driven, and focused on student learning. This means providing ongoing support and coaching that's tailored to each teacher's needs and goals."

— **Principal, Urban School District**

Leaders emphasized the importance of providing teachers with some degree of choice in their professional learning experiences. They advocated for differentiated learning opportunities that are responsive to educators' career stages, professional growth goals, and the needs of the students they serve. While recognizing the value of choice, many leaders also expressed difficulty in balancing this flexibility with system-level priorities that may require standardization. Aligning individual, school, and district priorities remains a persistent tension in professional learning design.

"Some of our staff are first-year teachers, some have 25 years. They need different things, and it's hard to meet everyone where they are." — **Principal, Northern New Mexico District**

To maximize impact and minimize resistance, leaders stressed that teachers' professional learning should be strategically aligned across departments, initiatives, and instructional goals. Without coherence, teachers can experience initiative fatigue, especially when professional learning efforts feel like short-lived trends rather than sustained commitments. This skepticism can erode engagement and trust in new practices.

"Balancing choice with system priorities is real. We want them to grow where they need, but we also need coherence—especially with state initiatives." — **District Professional Learning Director**

"We've been through so many frameworks and acronyms. Teachers are tired. If we can't show how things connect, we're going to lose buy-in." — **Principal, Secondary School**

Leaders also highlighted the critical need for time—not only for participation in professional learning, but also for reflection, feedback, and collaboration. Without this sustained follow-up, professional learning is often perceived by teachers as an isolated add-on rather than a meaningful driver of instructional improvement.

"The state made a decision that the best way to impact student learning is to have more instructional time...there is not any time for the adults, and funding more time for the adults would require the state to care about adult learning."
— **District Leader, Urban School**

"We keep saying that we want job-embedded professional learning, but we don't create the structures to make it happen. We're stealing from prep time." — **High School Principal**

Similar to teachers' responses in their focus groups, principals in rural and tribal schools were particularly vocal about the need for more professional learning focused on culturally responsive and sustaining practices. While district leaders also recognized this need, they tended to frame it as one component within broader equity efforts. Leaders in rural and small schools noted that limited staffing can further constrain professional learning opportunities. Staff absences and small team sizes often reduce the feasibility of grade-level teams, prompting schools to adopt creative solutions such as cross-grade or subject-based groupings for collaborative learning.

"We're rural and have a high Native population. Most of what we get is still generic. We've had to bring in our own people to make professional learning feel relevant." — **Principal, Rural School District**

These perspectives underscore the importance of designing professional learning systems that are embedded, coherent, differentiated, and sustainable while also being realistic about the operational conditions under which schools function.

Aspiring Educators

During focus groups with the aspiring educators, they expressed a clear and unified vision for the future of teacher professional learning, one that integrates social-emotional learning (SEL) and mental health strategies alongside core academic instruction. They emphasized that understanding students' emotional well-being is just as essential as mastering subject-area content, particularly in today's increasingly complex classroom environments.

There was a strong preference for experiential learning approaches over traditional, lecture-based professional learning. Aspiring teachers described mentoring, clinical placements, and hands-on projects as the most effective methods for developing instructional competence. In contrast, they viewed theoretical or lecture-heavy training as disconnected from the realities of classroom teaching. Many noted that the opportunity to practice teaching under the guidance of experienced, effective educators was critical to their growth and confidence.

In terms of content priorities, aspiring educators expressed a high level of interest in being well-prepared to support students with disabilities, multi-language learners, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. They emphasized the need for professional learning that equips them with inclusive, differentiated strategies that reflect the diversity of the student populations they expect to serve.

Additionally, participants emphasized that professional learning focused on technology integration was particularly important for teachers in upper-grade levels. They viewed digital tools as vital for engaging students and enhancing instruction in middle and high school settings, though less central in early childhood and lower elementary contexts.

These insights point to a strong demand among future teachers for practical, inclusive, and emotionally responsive professional learning that mirror the challenges and opportunities of today's classrooms.

"We focused on all the paperwork, doing 10-page lesson plans. That's not even a thing anymore... What we should be doing is observing, planning meaningful activities, and seeing good teaching modeled. That's how we learn."

— University Teacher Candidate

"There's been a lack of focus on the uniqueness that comes with our students—whether it's culturally, emotionally, intellectually. There are so many differences and so many different approaches for each student. Learning how to accommodate that would be awesome knowledge to have." — University Teacher Candidate

Summary of Educator Perspectives

Educators across New Mexico view professional learning as both essential and uneven in quality, access, and relevance. Collaborative models such as PLCs, peer observations, and co-planning are the most valued, while traditional workshops and coaching vary in effectiveness. Despite alignment with key priorities like SEL, culturally responsive teaching, and structured literacy, significant content gaps remain—particularly in math, science, STEM, social studies, and trauma-informed practices. While most educators believe professional learning improves instruction, over 40% described it as ineffective or a poor use of time. Teachers emphasized that professional learning must be context-specific, job-embedded and tailored to their content and student populations.

Chapter 4 Endnotes

¹⁴³ Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications. Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner (2017). [Effective Teacher Professional Development](#).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter analyzes findings from the literature review, policy analysis, and educator perspectives to identify overarching conclusions and the implications of these conclusions. It addresses professional learning topics, quantity and quality, portfolio balance, and state and local roles. The following chapter will offer policy recommendations for addressing these conclusions and implications.

- Strengths Provide a Foundation: New Mexico has several existing strengths that provide a foundation for further improvement in educator professional learning.
- Needs and Professional Learning Experiences are Mismatched: Many educators report a mismatch between their needs and the professional learning they are experiencing.
- Professional Learning Portfolios are Unbalanced: Many educators experience too much informational, one-shot, state-required professional learning relative to opportunities for ongoing, job-embedded professional learning tied to local needs.
- State Role is Limited: The state has overemphasized its role as a professional learning provider and underemphasized its role in setting up systems and structures that enable effective professional learning at all levels of the system.

Strengths Provide a Foundation

We found several strengths that New Mexico can build on as it works to further improve educator professional learning. At the heart of this study are New Mexico's teachers—dedicated professionals who work every day to educate the state's children and youth and prepare them to thrive in the 21st Century, while seeking relevant, meaningful opportunities to strengthen their professional practice.

Educator Desire for Quality Professional Learning

A majority of educators value professional learning and find it important for their professional growth. Many respondents acknowledged that professional learning helped improve their instructional practices and supported their students' needs. They indicated a desire for more professional learning if it is high-quality and useful. Their definition of "high-quality" professional learning aligns with national research showing that teachers prefer professional learning that is collaborative, job-embedded, and relevant to their practice.¹⁴⁴

Prevalence of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

PLCs are widespread across New Mexico schools. Educators reported that they appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with peers, especially when PLCs are well-facilitated and focus on instructional improvement. These sentiments are consistent with research that indicates PLCs with these features improve instruction.¹⁴⁵

Support for New Teachers

Novice teachers appreciated receiving targeted support, often through induction programs or mentorship aligned with their developmental needs. This echoes evidence that strong mentoring and induction programs enhance teacher retention and instructional effectiveness.¹⁴⁶

Promising Pockets of District and School Leader Investment

Some school and district leaders are intentionally building professional learning systems that are responsive to educator needs and aligned with school priorities.

Robust Performance Evaluation System

The NMPED has designed, implemented and trained educators on a robust performance evaluation system for teachers and administrators that provides educators with feedback and a strong foundation for identifying individual needs for professional learning.

Tri-annual Evaluation Requirements for Professional Learning Programs

Administrative code requires that all statewide, PED, charter schools, and public school district professional learning programs must be evaluated every three years. While these evaluations are not always happening in practice, the code provides a strong foundation for emphasizing evaluation in the future. The requirement for tri-annual evaluations aligns with best practice recommendations that professional learning effectiveness be continuously assessed and refined.¹⁴⁷

Broad Use of Title II-A Funds by Districts

A higher percentage of New Mexican districts prioritized professional learning as compared to the national average in 2022 - 2023. Title II-A funding can be used for a range of purposes, including educator recruitment, hiring, and retention activities, evaluation, and program administration. A higher use of funding for professional learning suggests that New Mexico districts prioritize professional learning over other allowable uses of funding.

A Vetted Professional Learning Marketplace

NMPED is making strides to help LEAs select high-quality curriculum-based professional learning opportunities with its High-Quality Professional Learning Marketplace.

Mismatch Between Needs and Professional Learning Experience

Many educators report that current professional learning does not align with their needs, highlighting clear opportunities for improvement.

State One-Size-Fits-All Trainings Often Fail to Meet Individual Needs

Educators' professional learning needs vary significantly across a range of factors, including license type, career stage (novice vs. veteran), grade level (elementary vs. secondary), geographic location (rural, suburban, urban), and school type (traditional, charter, or tribal). These variations reflect differences in teacher preparation, student populations, instructional demands, and available resources. Given research that shows one-shot informational workshops rarely produce sustained changes in teacher practice,¹⁴⁸ it is not surprising that teachers sometimes spoke very negatively about statewide trainings that failed to differentiate for individual needs.

Professional Learning is Often Ineffective

A substantial number of educators report that their professional learning experiences are ineffective. This finding is not surprising given that many New Mexico educators report that research-based features (sustained, collaborative, and job-embedded) are missing. Approximately one-third of survey respondents indicated dissatisfaction with the quality and quantity of professional learning, and over 40% felt that much of their professional learning time was not well spent.

Professional Learning Communities are Common but Often Lack Quality

PLCs are the structure most reported and valued by educators. However, the quality and impact of PLCs vary widely. And—even though they are the most common structure—many educators do not have access to enabling conditions for PLCs, such as common planning time or designated professional learning days. Research on PLCs cautions that without administrative support, common planning time, and a clear instructional focus, PLCs often fail to impact practice.¹⁴⁹

Preparation Programs are Inadequately Addressing Needs

New and early-career teachers—regardless of whether they were prepared traditionally or through alternative pathways—

were more likely to express professional learning needs, particularly in the areas of classroom management, differentiated and inclusive instruction, trauma-informed instructional practices, and social-emotional learning. This reinforces national studies identifying these topic as common areas where educators need stronger preparation and ongoing professional learning.¹⁵⁰ However, the New Mexico Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (NMACTE) sent a memo to PED (dated June 2025) urging a “systematic revision of statewide teacher preparation standards to ensure that all new teachers are prepared to meet the academic, cultural, and linguistic needs of New Mexico’s diverse student population.” The memo noted that the current standards—last formally updated in 2018 with the integration of InTASC—are supported only by a patchwork of policies and statutory language that lack cohesion. A systemic revision to teacher preparation standards could address the gaps in training found in this report and also create consistency of training across traditional, alternative and residency programs.

Professional Learning Portfolios are Unbalanced

The mismatches described above can be attributable to an unbalanced portfolio of professional learning opportunities. A well-balanced professional learning portfolio supports learning at multiple levels—individual, team, school, district, and state—with a particular emphasis on addressing local needs. While schools, districts, and the state always have some informational training that needs to be addressed (e.g., awareness about new laws, training on how to use a new technology system, etc.), a well-balanced professional learning portfolio minimizes this type of training so that time can be used for professional learning that targets more complex ideas using evidence-based features of professional learning that can result in meaningful shifts in educator practice.

Table 8: Examples of Professional Learning Needs at Each Level

Level	Broad Examples	Specific Example
<i>Individual Professional Learning</i>	National Board Certification; professional learning that addresses individual need as identified in performance review; instructional coaching targeting individual needs, etc.	As a new teacher, I need professional learning to help me improve classroom discipline & student engagement
<i>Teacher Team Professional Learning</i>	Weekly PLC meetings that use data to identify student learning needs and strategies to address them	Students in our grade level are struggling with word problems so we need professional learning to improve instructional strategies for word problems.
<i>School Professional Learning</i>	How to implement new school-wide programs, curriculum mapping	Our school just adopted PBIS so all teachers need to learn how to implement it, including shifting mindsets.
<i>School Informational Training</i>	New school policies and procedures	Our school just decided to implement a new data system for grading and we all need to be trained on how to input our grades in the system.
<i>District Professional Learning</i>	Professional learning to address a district-wide need	The district identified a district-wide need to address student SEL and hires a consultant to work with teachers across three professional development days
<i>District Informational Training</i>	New district policies and procedures	The district has purchased new whiteboards for all classrooms and teachers need training on how to use them.
<i>State Professional Learning</i>	Professional learning to address statewide needs	In response to low literacy scores, all teachers are required to learn about the science of reading
<i>State Informational Training</i>	New state policies and procedures	Teachers need to be aware of new state laws for special education students

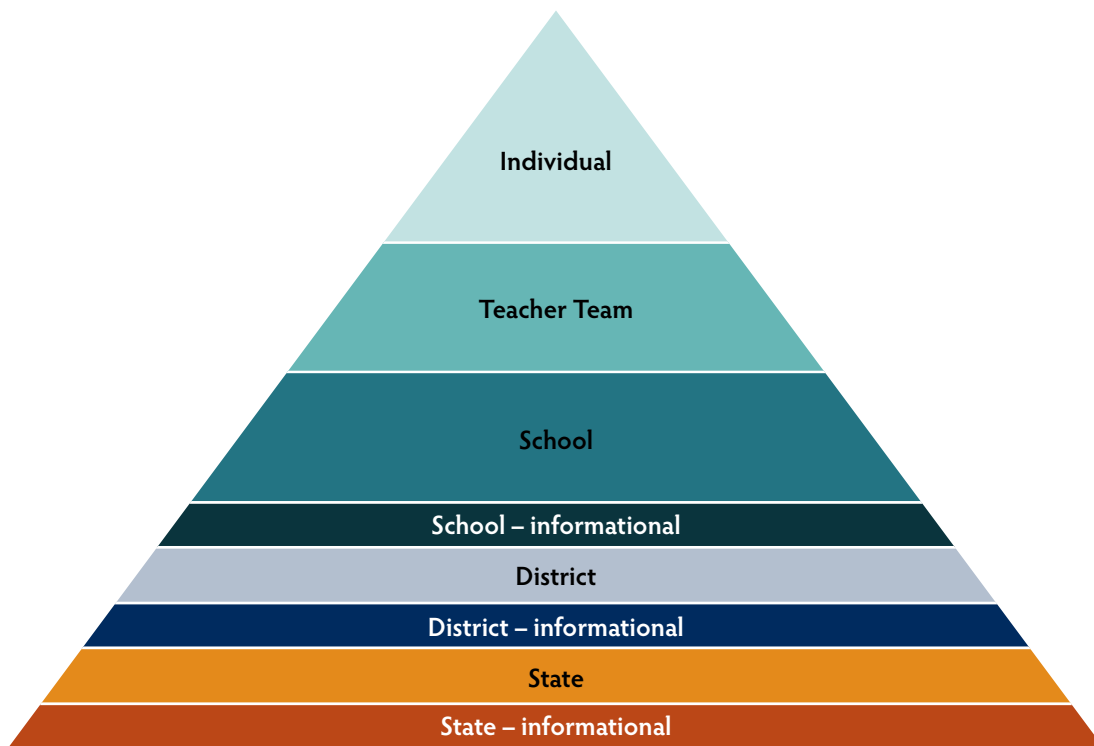


Figure 4: Desirable Balance of a Professional Learning Portfolio

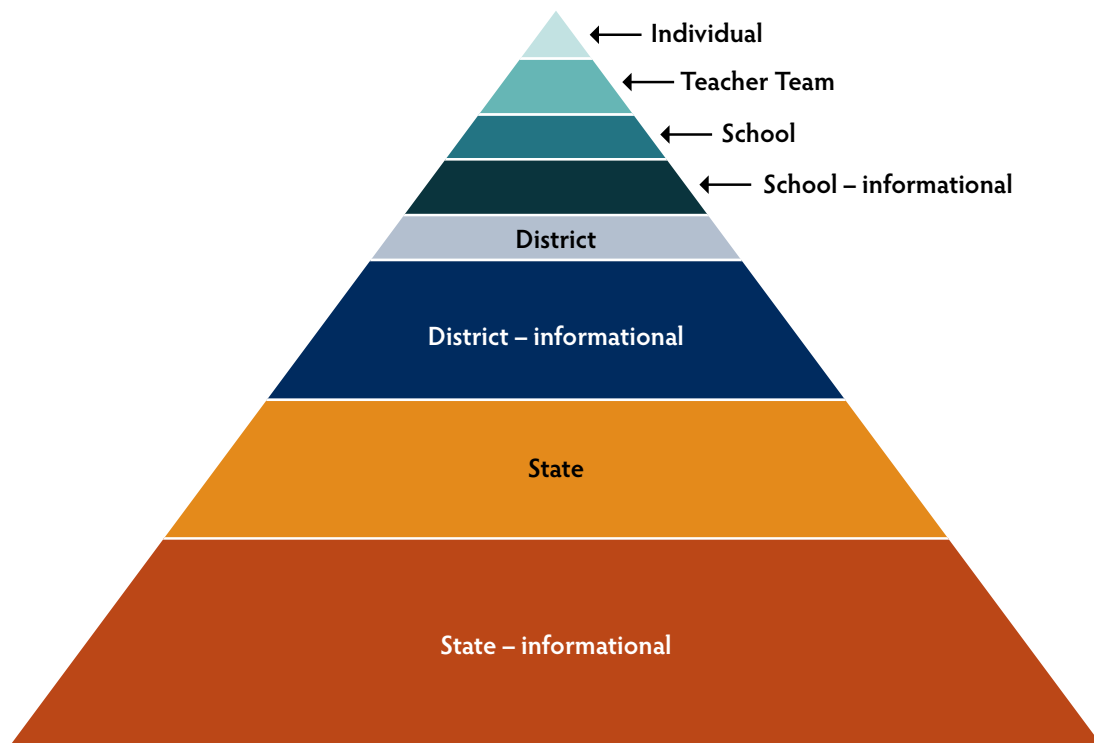


Figure 5: Common Balance for New Mexico Educators' Professional Learning Portfolios

Some New Mexico educators—especially in extended day programs or schools and districts that prioritize professional learning—do in fact have a well-balanced professional learning portfolio. Many, however, report experiencing an unbalanced professional learning portfolio that is overly focused on top-down, compliance-driven sessions. This problem is most acute in schools with limited professional learning time and access, where the few available opportunities are often used for informational or logistical updates rather than deeper instructional learning. When state-mandated professional learning dominates the calendar, it can crowd out more responsive, locally driven opportunities. The imbalance mirrors broader concerns in the literature that too much professional learning time is devoted to compliance training rather than job-embedded, collaborative learning.¹⁵¹

State Role is Limited

State Role is Currently Focused on Providing Professional Learning

Currently, the PED functions primarily as a provider of professional learning, often through centralized workshops or statewide initiatives. While some offerings are high-quality and sustained, many vary in the extent to which they reflect evidence-based practices for professional learning. They tend to be one-shot informational training focused on compliance as required by legal rulings or statute, such as notifying educators of updates to special education law or rules. Several bureaus and divisions run workshops addressing the content their office addresses, but these vary in quality and often fail to differentiate for different types of teachers or levels of background knowledge. This reflects a limited conception of the state's role, which research suggests should also include functions such as standards setter, funder, and equity champion.

State is Missing Opportunities to Play Other Roles in Promoting Educator Professional Learning

The following chart ranks the strength of the state's role in other areas outlined in the literature review. Using evidence collected across study data collection efforts, roles were identified as strong, mixed, weak, or no evidence of the role.

Table 9. Evidence of State Role in Professional Learning

Type of Role	Description of Role
Policy Framework Setter	Weak Role: A framework exists in statute but is rarely used in practice.
Professional Learning Standards Definer	Weak Role: The framework specifies outdated standards and they are rarely used in practice.
Funder	Weak Role: Limited evidence of prioritizing state funding for professional learning and/or innovative use of funding. Spends Title II federal funds on professional learning, but less than national average.
Program Authorizer & Endorser	Mixed Role: PED provides a marketplace for professional learning related to high-quality instructional materials but specific to curriculum.
Licensure Requirement Setter	Weak Role: professional learning is required to progress to higher levels of licensure but not for licensure renewal.
Professional Learning Provider	Mixed Role: PED provides significant amounts of professional learning, but they vary in quality and alignment with state priorities.
Data Collector & Evaluator	Weak Role: Data is not collected and program evaluation sometimes occurs but is not enforced.
Technical Assistance Provider	No evidence of this role.
Convener & Collaborator	No evidence of this role.
Equity Champion	No evidence of this role.
Innovation Catalyst	No evidence of this role.
Leadership Capacity Builder	Weak Role: No evidence of this role in the past. In the future, site administrator preparation programs will be required to teach and assess on leading professional learning.

Opportunities that will Strengthen the State's Ability to Respond to Martinez/Yazzie

The findings presented in this chapter point to several missed opportunities to respond to the needs outlined in Martinez/Yazzie. In particular:

- Offerings do not explicitly address necessary topics (with the exception of structured literacy) despite teacher's desire for more professional learning in those areas
- Many teachers across the state lack access to structures for quality professional learning, regardless of topics
- Schools and districts lack capacity (funding, time, and knowledge) to provide professional learning aligned to local needs.

New Mexico has a unique opportunity to develop a system of professional learning as part of the remedy to the Martinez/Yazzie lawsuit. The next chapter offers concrete recommendations for how PED might shift its role related to professional learning in order to address areas needing improvement and to balance the types of professional learning available to educators across the state. For the most part, these strategies involve putting systems and structures into place that build capacity and accountability for more and better professional learning at the local level.

Chapter 5 Endnotes

¹⁴⁴ Darling-Hammond, Hylar, & Gardner (2017). [Effective Teacher Professional Development](#).

¹⁴⁵ Vescio, Ross, & Adams (2008). [A Review of Research on the Impact of Professional Learning Communities on Teaching Practice and Student Learning](#).

¹⁴⁶ Ingersoll & Strong (2011). [The Impact of Induction and Mentoring Programs for Beginning Teachers: A Critical Review of the Research](#).

¹⁴⁷ Desimone & Garet (2015). [Best Practices in Teachers' Professional Development in the United States](#).

¹⁴⁸ Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley (2007). Reviewing the Evidence on How Teacher Professional Development Affects Student Achievement.

¹⁴⁹ Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace & Thomas (2006). [Professional Learning Communities: A Review of the Literature](#).

¹⁵⁰ Jones & Kahn (2017). [The Evidence Base for How We Learn. Supporting Students' Social, Emotional, and Academic Development](#); Perry & Daniels (2016). [Implementing Trauma - Informed Practices in the School Setting: A Pilot Study](#).

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CHAPTER 6: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

States play a unique and powerful role in shaping the quality and accessibility of professional learning for educators. By leveraging its authority and resources, New Mexico has an opportunity to build on its strong foundation as a provider of professional learning and evolve into a catalyst for greater statewide coherence, quality, and sustained support. The recommendations that follow emphasize strengthening the state's capacity to support districts through responsive systems that elevate local voice and agency while ensuring professional learning is high-quality, equitable, and aligned with both local needs and state priorities.

Although teacher preparation was not the central focus of this study, recent work—including a report¹⁵² and memorandum¹⁵³ from the New Mexico Association of Colleges of Teacher Education—creates an important policy window that connects directly to these findings. Several recommendations therefore highlight opportunities to better align professional learning with educator preparation, licensure, and career-long development.

Collectively, these recommendations focus on building the backbone infrastructure needed to support a coherent statewide system of professional learning. They emphasize stronger alignment across teacher preparation, induction, ongoing professional learning, and leadership development; improve teachers' access to high-quality learning opportunities throughout their careers; and strengthen coordination among state, district, and school-level efforts through more strategic leadership from the Public Education Department. Each recommendation is accompanied by a rationale grounded in this study's findings and, where appropriate, examples from other states.

Developing a comprehensive and integrated statewide system of professional learning also aligns closely with the priorities identified in the Martinez/Yazzie consolidated lawsuit. Effective professional learning advances equitable access to high-quality instruction by strengthening educators' ability to meet the needs of all students—particularly students with disabilities, English Learners, Native American students, and economically disadvantaged students. It also supports the development and retention of well-prepared, culturally and linguistically responsive educators while helping districts make more effective use of existing investments, including Title II-A funding, through stronger coordination and evidence-based professional learning models.

Importantly, the students identified in the Martinez/Yazzie ruling are not four distinct populations; there is substantial overlap among these groups. This intersectionality underscores the need for a comprehensive professional learning system rather than isolated initiatives. Teachers also require differentiated support throughout their careers. New teachers often need intensive assistance with classroom management and instructional practice, while experienced educators benefit from deeper content knowledge and advanced pedagogical learning tailored to their students' evolving needs. Together, the recommendations in this chapter provide a roadmap for building a statewide professional learning system that addresses the challenges identified in Martinez/Yazzie while creating the conditions for continuous educator growth and improved outcomes for all students.



Designing a Coherent System for Professional Learning in New Mexico

The following recommendations have been designed to help New Mexico create the infrastructure that will increase teachers' access to relevant high quality professional learning that supports their professional growth throughout their careers in New Mexico's public education system:

Table 10. Policy Recommendations Summary

Develop New Mexico's Professional Learning Infrastructure	Increase Educators' Access to Relevant High Quality Professional Learning
Infrastructure Recommendation 1: Focus a bureau at PED on Professional Learning.	Access Recommendation 1: Invest in Strategic Staffing Models that Provide Structures and a Framework for Teacher Collaboration, Ongoing Job-Embedded Professional Learning and Continuous Improvement Processes.
Infrastructure Recommendation 2: Build Statewide Capacity, Coordination and Oversight for Regional and District Professional Learning by Funding a Professional Learning Specialist in each REC.	Access Recommendation 2: Grow New Mexico's Cadre of Teacher Leaders. Increase the Number of Coaches and Teacher Leaders in Schools Who Have Content and Pedagogical Expertise.
Infrastructure Recommendation 3: Require Systemic Meaningful Professional Learning for Teacher License Renewal and Advancement.	Access Recommendation 3: Strengthen the Capacity of School & District Leaders to Lead High-Quality Professional Learning Systems
Infrastructure Recommendation 4: Embed Essential Skills into Teacher Preparation and Induction Programs Aligned to State and District Priorities.	

Recommendations to Develop New Mexico's Professional Learning Infrastructure

These recommendations have been designed to help New Mexico develop the policies and investments that will build the PED's capacity to offer backbone support for developing and sustaining a professional learning system that ensures educators throughout New Mexico have access to high quality, relevant and on-going professional learning.

Infrastructure Recommendation 1: Focus a Bureau at PED on Professional Learning

Description: PED should structure a bureau to provide vision and coherence for professional learning. This bureau should:

- Work with teachers, districts, schools and Tribes to define, establish and delineate PED, district, IHE, REC and other entities' roles and responsibilities for professional learning implementation in New Mexico.
- Update standards for professional learning to define high-quality professional learning, incorporating evidence-based features such as:
 - Adult and sociocultural learning theories
 - Collaborative learning models
 - Balanced professional learning structures (e.g., the 70-20-10 model)
 - Sustained training with practice and feedback over time
- Review and approve all professional learning offered by PED, ensuring alignment to PED's strategic frameworks and guidelines, i.e. the New Mexico Indigenous Instructional Scope, New Mexico Mathematics Framework, Mathematics Instructional Leadership Guide, New Mexico Literacy Framework, etc.
- Offer guidance to other professional learning providers, including districts, schools, educator preparation programs (traditional and alternative), tribes, higher education partners, and nonprofit organizations:
 - Incorporating teacher and student voice (especially middle/high school and teacher prep students) to identify learning priorities.
 - Consulting with Tribes.
 - Addressing needs identified in the Martinez/Yazzie lawsuit.

- Differentiating supports for novice, veteran, traditionally certified, and alternatively certified teachers.
- Structuring school calendars to allow for collaboration and professional learning.
- Facilitating professional learning synchronously versus asynchronously, with an emphasis on protecting collaborative, in-person learning time.
- Set up and serve as the coordination, reporting, and accountability hub for the Professional Learning Specialists at New Mexico's RECs (see infrastructure recommendation two).
- This bureau would also monitor and report on the impact of professional learning on the academic and equity indicators for the four student groups named in the Martinez/Yazzie lawsuit.

Key responsibilities would include:

- Support district professional learning plan development and alignment with school/district priorities and performance evaluation systems.
- Ensure sufficient professional learning time in school calendars and schedules.
- Review and analyze School Improvement Plans (SIPs) & effective professional learning component requirements.
- Monitor and report on regional professional learning needs and gaps.
- Ensure adequate access to devices and reliable internet for staff and work with PED to secure resources to schools and districts with inadequate technology support.
- Coordinate regional professional learning opportunities, such as annual regional summits or cross-district mentoring, aligned with local priorities and needs.
- Provide PED Secretary and the Legislative Education Study Committee with annual report detailing local district needs and opportunities. Report annually on educator and leader's access to professional learning, including the type, number and percent of hours that educators engage in different kinds of professional learning (e.g. job-embedded and collaborative, informational, required by the state, district or school, or self-selected).
- Provide technical assistance to PED divisions and partners to ensure the professional learning they offer is aligned with evidence-based features and responsive to regional and local needs.
- Conduct an evaluation of professional learning every three years, as required by state regulations, and report the findings to the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC).
- Conduct an annual statewide review of professional learning landscape and present findings to the LESC to inform future priorities and address identified gaps.
- Create PED High-Quality Professional Learning Marketplace by:
 - Creating a comprehensive list of all professional learning opportunities offered by PED, RECs, universities, charter and tribal schools, and external providers.
 - Using geomapping to identify underserved regions and develop plans to increase access in those areas.
 - Promoting resources so educators can easily find opportunities aligned with their professional needs.

Rationale: States play a critical role not only in defining professional learning standards but also in monitoring their alignment and adoption statewide. In New Mexico, however, our study found that the state relies on outdated professional learning standards and provides limited technical assistance and guidance to districts. To address this, we recommend updating the standards and placing them under a dedicated Bureau within PED to oversee implementation and ensure alignment across all departments. Leveraging PED funded REC Professional Learning Specialists in this process would help ensure district professional learning plans align with the state's overall professional learning framework.

Timeline: The implementation of this recommendation may align best with the 2026 Gubernatorial Election cycle, as the incoming administration will have the opportunity to set new priorities and leadership within the PED.

Infrastructure Recommendation 2: Build Statewide Capacity for Regional and District Professional Learning by Funding REC-Hired Professional Learning Specialists

Description: PED should strengthen New Mexico's professional learning system by providing each Regional Education Cooperative (REC) with funding to hire a Professional Learning Specialist. These specialists would be REC employees, supervised and evaluated under each REC's employee evaluation system, ensuring alignment with REC statutory roles as support and technical assistance providers—not compliance agents.

Districts consistently trust their RECs to provide responsive, non-punitive support. Locating these positions within the RECs preserves that trust while enabling PED to coordinate statewide priorities through funding, shared expectations, and cross-REC collaboration.

Core responsibilities would include:

- Supporting districts in developing and aligning professional learning plans with local priorities and continuous improvement processes.
- Helping districts ensure adequate, protected professional learning time in calendars and schedules.
- Strengthening professional learning components of School Improvement Plans through coaching and technical assistance, not compliance review.
- Supporting sustained, job embedded professional learning that improves instruction and student outcomes.
- Identifying regional professional learning needs and communicating them to PED to inform statewide strategy.
- Assisting districts in aligning professional learning to Martinez/Yazzie requirements.
- Helping districts address technology barriers that limit access to high-quality professional learning.
- Coordinating regional professional learning opportunities tailored to local needs.
- Providing PED with an annual summary of regional needs and opportunities.

Rationale: PED's current model relies heavily on short-term, centrally delivered training, limiting its ability to meet diverse regional needs. RECs—by statute—exist to provide support and technical assistance, making them the appropriate home for regional Professional Learning Specialists. Funding REC-based positions allows PED to advance statewide priorities while preserving local trust and ensuring professional learning is responsive, job-embedded, and equitable across regions. To be effective, there would need to be more standardization of REC service categories, programs, and processes so that oversight and systematic support become consistent across New Mexico's RECs.

Timeline: This recommendation should be implemented alongside the creation of a dedicated professional learning bureau within PED, with incentives or expectations to ensure districts fully utilize REC-based Professional Learning Specialists.

Infrastructure Recommendation 3: Require Systemic Meaningful Professional Learning for Teacher License Renewal and Advancement

Description: Strengthen teacher quality and incentivize continued growth through policy and process that links licensure renewal to meaningful, effective professional learning .

- a. For Level II teachers: Make license renewal contingent upon completion of department-approved professional learning . Department approval must include input with regional and local communities, including Tribes.
- b. For Level III teachers: Offer two renewal pathways:
 1. Completion of department-approved professional learning. Department approval must include input from regional and local communities, including Tribes. Or
 2. Earning teacher leader qualifications to serve as a school or district professional learning specialist or instructional coach.

To promote alignment between statewide and local efforts, districts should:

- Conduct a cost estimate of funding needs for Level III teachers to take on leadership roles in their schools that support teachers' access to professional learning that is high quality: defined as job-embedded, relevant, and collaborative.
- Incorporate into district professional learning plans how to leverage Level III teachers with trainer or coach qualifications to build internal capacity for professional learning and instructional support.

Rationale: States set the policy conditions that guide local decisions, and one common approach is linking professional learning to license renewal. Our analysis found that 44 states require teachers to complete continuing education for license renewal, but in New Mexico this applies only to Level I teachers. Level I licenses are not renewable; instead, teachers must use one of the state's approved pathways to advance. Once they obtain a Level II license, however, teachers are no longer required to complete professional learning for license renewal. The 2025 passage of HB 157 changed this for site- and district-level leaders holding Level IIIb licenses, who must now complete continuing education as part of their renewal process. Extending similar requirements to teachers at all levels would promote consistency and coherence across the system—and may even be welcomed. Our study found that most educators value professional learning, see it as essential to their growth, and report that it improves their instruction and their ability to meet student needs. Many also want more high-quality, relevant opportunities to deepen their professional practices. In addition, experienced educators expressed interest in serving as school or district professional learning specialists or instructional coaches, noting that districts often rely on external facilitators who provide lower-quality training and lack understanding of local contexts. Creating a teacher leadership pathway through the Level III license could be an effective way to meet this need.

Timeline: Introduce legislation in 2027.

In its 2025 report, the New Mexico Alliance for Teacher Residencies made two key recommendations:

1. Establish a Pre-Level I licensure tier that would apply to both alternatively licensed teachers and teacher residents.
2. Update the Teacher Residency Act (HB 13), which would provide a legislative opening to establishing the Pre-Level 1 license and for revising the Level II and Level III licensure renewal system so that it aligns with professional learning.

We recommend a meeting with the New Mexico Alliance for Teacher Residencies to review their timeline for advancing these recommendations into policy and to explore opportunities for integrating Level II and Level III licensure changes with proposed legislation.

Infrastructure Recommendation 4: Embed Essential Skills into Teacher Preparation and Induction Programs Aligned to State and District Priorities

Description: PED should work with all teacher preparation and induction programs to reduce the need for intensive early-career professional learning in social-emotional learning (SEL), culturally responsive practices (CRP), trauma-informed practices, student engagement and building a positive classroom culture. Integrate hands-on, practice-based learning in these content areas to ensure that aspiring and novice teachers are not just learning about the concepts but applying them in practice.

PED should:

- Collaborate with NMACTE to integrate how traditional, alternative, and residency-based teacher preparation programs address these content areas by partnering on a larger systemic revision of statewide teacher preparation standards.
- Establish common assessments aligned to new standards that incorporate hands-on practice-based learning.
- Provide technical assistance to traditional, alternative, and residency-based teacher programs on incorporation of new standards and competencies into all teacher preparation programs (traditional, alternative, and residency-based).
- Require traditional, alternative, and residency-based teacher programs to submit evidence to PED on how they align to new statewide standards and competencies.

Rationale: On June 6, 2025, NMACTE sent a memo to PED urging a “systematic revision of statewide teacher preparation standards to ensure that all new teachers are prepared to meet the academic, cultural, and linguistic needs of New Mexico's diverse student population.” The memo noted that the current standards—last formally updated in 2018 with the integration of InTASC—are supported only by a patchwork of policies and statutory language that lack cohesion. While teacher preparation

standards remain outdated, programs for site leaders and aspiring superintendents have already integrated common assessments to measure candidate proficiency against state and national standards, provide authentic practice in instructional leadership, and collect data for accountability and improvement. PED should continue to follow NMACTE's call to update statewide standards and align teacher preparation practices with those now in place for site leaders and superintendent programs. By doing so, PED can strengthen coherence across preparation and induction, require all pathways to equip candidates with essential core skills (including the four identified in our study), and support induction programs to build on what teachers learned in pre-service training. This approach would provide novice teachers with more consistent and practical support while improving alignment across the system.

Timeline: NMACTE proposes the systemic revision of teacher preparation standards now to align with the state's timeline regarding the Martinez-Yazzie case.

Recommendations for Increasing Educators' Access to Relevant High-Quality Professional Learning

This set of recommendations are designed to work with the infrastructure recommendations to ensure that educators in New Mexico have access to relevant high-quality professional learning that supports teachers' professional growth throughout their careers

Access Recommendation 1: Invest in Strategic Staffing Models that Provide Structures and a Framework for Teacher Collaboration, Ongoing Job-Embedded Professional Learning, and Continuous Improvement Processes

Description: Incentivize and support schools to design school calendars and schedules so that teachers have time for focused collaboration and on-going professional learning embedded within the work week. Encourage and incentivize school and district initiatives that support strategic staffing and scheduling models that prioritize teacher collaboration and continuous improvement processes to improve teachers' effectiveness and students' learning outcomes. Encourage districts to include a structure for supporting teachers to have time for on-going job embedded professional learning in their professional learning plans. Align professional learning plans with a professional learning framework, teacher and leader evaluations, and school improvement plans.

Rationale: Our study revealed that teachers want access to meaningful professional learning and collaboration. It also revealed that there is wide variation in teachers' access to professional learning and collaboration. Some had no dedicated professional learning days, while others had only a few days each year—often scheduled at the start, middle, or end of the year—or very limited time, such as 20 minutes once a week before school. By contrast, some districts build professional learning into the school year more intentionally. For example, Carlsbad Municipal Schools has implemented innovative staffing through the Opportunity Schools Model. Their schools' design schedules in such a way that grade-level and content focused PLCs are led by master teacher leaders who facilitate regular team planning meetings, as well as supporting teachers through coaching and co-teaching. In addition, the master teacher leaders have access to regular support to improve their teacher leadership work. PED is piloting innovative staffing with eight LEAs starting in 2026. In Albuquerque Public Schools (APS), certain schools use extended-day funding to pay teachers to arrive an hour before students, enabling daily collaborative meetings. APS is also supporting schools to do strategic staffing in alignment with Next Education Workforce, where teams of teachers are assigned a roster of students, and schedules are designed to support co-teaching and collaboration. These approaches matter because research consistently shows that focused collaboration is a core feature of effective professional learning. It allows teachers to share ideas, refine instructional practices, meet students' needs, and solve challenges together. For teachers' instructional time with students to be effective, teachers need time to plan for, assess, and reflect on instruction with teacher leaders, coaches, and peers. Our focus groups and teacher survey confirmed this: educators consistently identified collaborative approaches—such as professional learning communities (PLCs), peer observations, and co-planning—as the most valuable forms of professional learning and professional learning that they wished they had more time to engage.

Defining and supporting professional learning structures and the allowable uses of professional learning time is a common and important state role. For example, Michigan allows districts to count up to 10 hours of state-approved professional learning toward instructional time—subject to quality standards, timing limits, and alignment with district improvement goals. Strategic staffing models are reducing teacher turnover, increasing teacher satisfaction, and supporting students' academic growth.³⁴ Without clear state guidance and funding, however, districts struggle to create the time and space for meaningful on-going job embedded professional learning and collaborative learning.

Since educators consistently identified job-embedded learning—such as coaching, co-planning, and professional learning

communities—as the most impactful forms of professional learning, PED should develop a professional learning framework that supports districts to explicitly identify and support teachers' professional growth, as well as to support teacher leaders in leading professional learning. The framework should include guidance on how teacher leaders are selected (e.g., demonstrated instructional expertise, credentials, peer nomination); how teacher leaders are trained and supported, including specific strategies and practices that address Martinez/Yazzie, including seeking youth, teacher, local and Tribal input; how much protected time teacher leaders have to lead professional learning; how much protected time all teachers have to engage in job embedded professional learning; and how teacher leadership roles are compensated and sustained. Teacher, school, and district professional learning plans should be coordinated, aligned, and evaluated with this framework. Professional learning plans should include a description of the professional learning portfolio balance, (e.g. topic, number and percent of professional learning hours that are job-embedded and collaborative, informational, required by the state, district or school, or self-selected).

Timeline: The next step for this recommendation should be meeting with LFC, LESC, and PED to assess interest in submitting a funding request for the 2027 Legislative Session, building on current initiatives that incentivize and support schools/districts to pilot strategic staffing and scheduling models that increase teachers' access to meaningful job-embedded on-going professional learning and collaboration.

Access Recommendation 2: Grow New Mexico's cadre of teacher leaders. Increase the number of coaches and teacher leaders in schools who have content and pedagogical expertise.

Description: Implement a statewide pilot of teacher leadership programs, modeled after North Carolina's Advanced Teaching Roles Program and other proven strategic staffing approaches, to elevate accomplished veteran teachers into leadership roles that support embedded coaching and professional learning—without removing them from the classroom. The goal is to expand the reach of high-performing teachers, enhance instructional support, and build sustainable leadership capacity within schools. To accomplish this, PED should:

- a. Convene a statewide task force to develop program criteria and determine funding levels for legislative consideration, including how this model could work in different settings including rural, tribal, and charter schools.
- b. Release a Request for Proposals (RFP), based on the task force's recommendations, for entities (i.e. IHEs, RECs, Districts, Tribes, or Non-Profits) to develop 3-5 programs throughout New Mexico, in coordination with the Professional Learning Specialists in RECs.
- c. Release a Request for Applications (RFA) based on the task force's recommendations, encouraging teacher participation from districts of all sizes, types, and geographic regions. Develop cohorts that will be supported by selected programs named in step b.
- d. Provide technical assistance through a monthly community of practice for selected programs and REC Professional Learning Specialists to support cohesiveness and consistency in implementation with the task force's vision, while developing local capacity to grow teacher leaders. Each teacher leadership program will host a community of practice for district leaders in their cohort.
- e. Evaluate the pilots' impact on student outcomes, teacher practice, teacher satisfaction, and retention.

Rationale: Teachers in our study expressed a strong interest in taking on greater roles in professional learning, not just as participants but as facilitators and peer developers. This finding led to our recommendation that New Mexico establish a licensure structure allowing experienced educators to earn a Level III teacher leader license, with credentials as a professional learning specialist or instructional coach (see Infrastructure Recommendation three). However, this recommendation will only be meaningful if districts actively create roles for teacher leaders. The state can accelerate this process by piloting programs to test and scale effective practices. North Carolina's Advanced Teaching Roles Program—authorized in 2016 to create more attractive career pathways and retain effective teachers — offers a model both in its design and in how it was implemented and scaled. In North Carolina, many districts use strategic staffing models (i.e. Opportunity Culture or Next Education Workforce) to implement the Advanced Teaching Roles.

Timeline: This recommendation may be most effective as a long-term strategy, following the implementation of Infrastructure Recommendation Three, which proposes a new licensure renewal pathway for Level III teachers to become certified as district professional learning specialists or instructional coaches.

Access Recommendation 3: Strengthen the Capacity of School & District Leaders to Lead High-Quality Professional Learning Systems

Description: To ensure effective professional learning at the district and school levels, PED should create structures and policies that build the capacity of education leaders to design and lead high-impact professional learning systems,

- **Aspiring Superintendent Academies:** In 2025 legislators passed HB 157, require aspiring superintendents to complete an Aspiring Superintendent Academy to be licensed. PED should consider requiring programs to teach candidates how to develop district-wide systems that support teachers' access to differentiated, ongoing high-quality, balanced professional learning.
- **Site Administrator Preparation Programs:** Require preparation programs for principals and assistant principals to include common performance assessments requiring site administrators to demonstrate their abilities to lead professional learning systems.
- **Create Structures that Support Ongoing professional learning for Leaders:** Ensure district and school leaders have access to differentiated professional learning focused on designing and leading high-impact professional learning systems, with credit available for license renewal.
- **School Board Engagement:** Partner with the New Mexico School Board Association to create materials that educate school board members on:
 - The impact of professional learning on student outcomes
 - Their role in supporting educator development
 - Strategies for advocating for professional learning in district priorities
 - Professional learning portfolio balance for leaders and teachers in their district

Rationale: Our study found that some schools and districts are already building professional learning systems that respond to educator and community needs and align with school priorities, but these remain exceptions. To make this the norm, New Mexico should prioritize ensuring all school and district leaders have the knowledge, skills, competencies, time and support to design strong professional learning systems. States can strengthen professional learning by investing in the leadership capacity of district leaders, principals, and instructional coaches who shape the conditions for teachers' on-going professional development and growth, with a focus on improving learning conditions and opportunities for the four student groups named in Martinez/Yazzie. This includes leadership academies, coaching, and communities of practice. States can also ensure that leadership preparation programs and licensure systems reinforce leader skills in designing and implementing structures to foster professional learning. For example, the New York State Education Department supports its *Leadership Coaching for School Improvement* initiative, which provides targeted coaching to school and district leaders on how to build and sustain professional learning communities. New Mexico laid a foundation to build leadership capacity with the passage of House Bill 157 in 2025. HB 157 establishes a tiered licensure and preparation system for site administrators and superintendents, setting role-specific requirements, strengthening qualifications, and authorizing the Public Education Department to oversee administrator preparation programs. The implementation of HB 157 offers a timely opportunity for New Mexico to embed key professional learning components into leadership preparation statewide.

Timeline: The implementation timeline for HB 157 has begun, and PED is working on establishing criteria and program approval for Aspiring Superintendent Academies and Site Administration Programs during the 2025-2026 calendar year. In 2026-27, the focus will shift to launching ongoing professional learning for leaders.

Chapter 6 Endnotes

¹⁵² The New Mexico Alliance for Teacher Residencies. (2025) [The Time is Now: Strengthening New Mexico's Educator Preparation Systems](#);

¹⁵³ New Mexico Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (June 6, 2025). Letter to Secretary Mariana Padilla.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Teacher & School Demographics

Table A1 presents the characteristics of the teacher respondents and their schools.

Table A1. Teacher and School Characteristics (1,645 teachers filled out this section of the survey)

Characteristic		Count (Percent)
Teacher Characteristics		
Race/Ethnicity	American Indian/Alaskan Native	49 (3%)
	Asian	71 (4%)
	Black/African American	71 (4%)
	Hispanic/Latino/Spanish origin	463 (28%)
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	28 (2%)
	White	749 (46%)
	Prefer not to say	161 (10%)
	Prefer to self-describe	53 (3%)
Gender	Male	307 (19%)
	Female	1,217 (74%)
	Non-Binary	31 (2%)
	Prefer not to say	83 (5%)
	Prefer to self-describe	7 (.4%)
Teaching Experience	1st Year	64 (4%)
	Novice (2 - 3 years)	197 (12%)
	4 - 10 Years	507 (31%)
	10+ Years	877 (53%)
License Type	Alternative Level I	167 (10%)
	Traditional Level I	151 (9%)
	Level II	588 (36%)
	Level III A & B	706 (43%)
	Intern/Waiver/Substitute	25 (2%)
Intention to Stay in Teaching	No longer than the end of the year	75 (5%)
	1 - 3 Years	302 (18%)
	3 - 5 Years	340 (21%)
	More than 5 Years	928 (56%)
School Characteristics		
School Grade Level (checked all that applied)	Elementary (PreK-5)	802 (49%)
	Middle School/Junior High (6-8)	637 (39%)
	High School (9-12)	634 (39%)
School Type	Traditional	1,306 (79%)
	Charter	287 (17%)
	Tribal (BIE and Tribally-Controlled)	52 (3%)
School Community	Rural	566 (34%)
	Mid-sized Town/Suburban	586 (36%)
	Urban	493 (30%)
School Enrollment	Fewer than 300 Students	451 (27%)
	300 to 599 Students	643 (39%)
	600 to 999 Students	278 (17%)
	1,000 or More Students	273 (17%)

School Location

Table A2 provides a breakdown of teacher responses by the counties in which they teach.

Table A2. School County

County Name	Count (Percent)	County Name	Count (Percent)	County Name	Count (Percent)
Bernalillo	504 (31%)	Harding	8 (1%)	Roosevelt	19 (1%)
Catron	11 (1%)	Hidalgo	15 (1%)	Sandoval	80 (5%)
Chavez	38 (2%)	Lea	56 (3%)	San Juan	73 (4%)
Cibola	24 (2%)	Lincoln	22 (1%)	San Miguel	26 (2%)
Colfax	23 (1%)	Los Alamos	40 (2%)	Santa Fe	136 (8%)
Curry	63 (4%)	Luna	18 (1%)	Sierra	6 (.4%)
DeBaca	10 (1%)	McKinley	51 (3%)	Socorro	15 (1%)
Doña Ana	91 (6%)	Mora	6 (.4%)	Taos Counties	25 (2%)
Eddy	62 (4%)	Otero	39 (2%)	Torrance	17 (1%)
Grant	45 (3%)	Quay	15 (1%)	Union	11 (1%)
Guadalupe	28 (2%)	Rio Arriba	31 (2%)	Valencia	37 (2%)

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