

ADDITIONAL PATHWAYS TO CAREER ADVANCEMENT:

Recognizing and Retaining High
Quality Teachers in New Mexico



+++++++ INTRODUCTION ++++++

The 20 members of Teach Plus New Mexico are teachers from 12 school districts across the state. We teach in a wide variety of traditional district and public charter schools and are invested in how state education policy affects our classrooms and our students. As Teach Plus Policy Fellows and current classroom teachers, we are concerned about the success of our students and the teaching profession in New Mexico. Our experience suggests that teachers are the single most important in-school factor in a student's education. Effective teachers need to be retained in the classroom to ensure students are taught by our best educators longer.

Currently in New Mexico, teachers work under a three-tiered licensure system that plays a critical role in determining teacher salaries. This brief explores the connection between licensure and the retention of our most effective educators. Specifically, we sought out to determine what changes could be made to the licensure system that would inspire our most effective teachers to stay and grow in the profession in New Mexico. Finally, this brief proposes policy recommendations for the licensure system in New Mexico aligned to our findings.

To understand what educators in New Mexico think about this issue, we conducted a flash poll in November-December 2017. Specifically, we wanted to know:

1. Are New Mexico educators supportive of additional pathways to achieve higher levels of licensure?
2. Are New Mexico educators supportive of the use of years of service and teacher evaluations as an additional pathway to Level Three licensure?

+++++++ FINDINGS ++++++

1. Nearly three out of four teachers in New Mexico support additional pathways for the Level Two to Level Three advancement.
2. Three out of four Level Two teachers support the idea of combining years of teaching experience with evaluation results as an additional pathway to earning a Level Three license.

+++++++ RECOMMENDATIONS ++++++

- 1 Create an additional pathway for teachers to advance from a Level Two licensure to a Level Three licensure.
- 2 Develop a pathway option that balances years of service with demonstrated classroom effectiveness.
- 3 Create an additional licensure level as an opportunity for advancement for the most effective Level Three teachers.

+++++ METHODOLOGY +++++

The flash poll was shared with teachers across New Mexico between November 17 and December 4, 2017 via email and social media. 1,006 current New Mexico teachers participated in the survey from across the state, including 78 Level One teachers, 507 Level Two teachers, 376 Level Three teachers, and 40 teachers on alternative license.

We asked New Mexico teachers the following two questions:

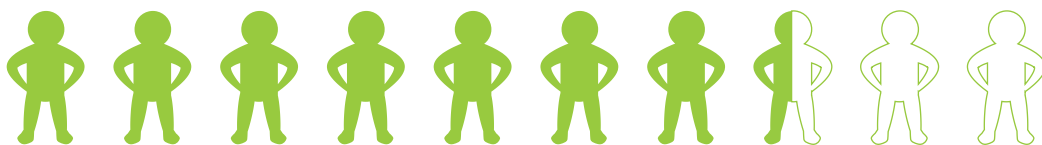
- + Currently, New Mexico teachers can attain Level Three licensure by obtaining a graduate degree or National Board Certification. To what degree would you support or oppose creating an additional path to obtaining a Level Three license?
- + To what degree would you support or oppose using a teacher's years of service combined with a minimum evaluation rating, either overall or specific domain ratings, without having to obtain a master's degree, as an additional route to reaching Level Three licensure?

We found that:

- + 74 percent of all teachers who took our poll are supportive of an additional pathway from Level Two to Level Three.¹
- + 64 percent of all teachers support the idea of years of service and teacher evaluations as an additional pathway to Level Three certification.
- + 80 percent of Level Two teachers support the idea of years of service and teacher evaluations as an additional pathway to Level Three certification.²

RECOMMENDATION 1: Create an additional pathway for teachers to advance from a Level Two licensure to a Level Three licensure.

74 percent of all teachers who took our poll are supportive of an additional pathway from Level Two to Level Three.



Currently, in order to advance from a Level Two to a Level Three license, a teacher must possess either a master's degree or be a National Board Certified teacher, must have taught as a Level Two teacher for three years and either have successfully passed a dossier submission and inspection or have an evaluation rating of effective and a 0.50 score according to their NMTeach VAS.³ Research indicates that having a master's degree,

especially in a non-related content area, does not improve the quality of teaching.

According to a 2011 Brookings Institution study, teachers with master's degrees are no more effective in the classroom, on average, than their colleagues without advanced degrees.⁴ The authors in this study confirmed this finding by comparing the student achievement of the same teachers before

and after they earned master's degrees, and found no impact.

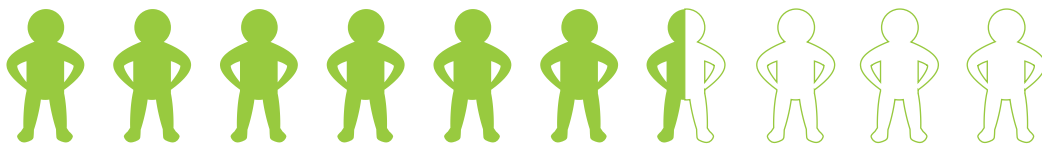
As explained by one New Mexico teacher: *“I am a Level Two teacher with 16 years of service and highly effective ratings every year. I simply have not obtained a master’s due to monetary and family commitment reasons. However, I continue to serve on committees just as Level Three teachers and continue to meet the same standards yet do not receive the pay due to simply not having a masters.”*⁵

*It is very discouraging to know this is the case and that with nine years left in my career I may never reach the income I feel I should have due to not having that piece of paper.”*⁵

The creation of an additional pathway to Level Three licensure would allow additional opportunities for effective educators to demonstrate and validate their effectiveness and earn higher salaries, offering an additional incentive for them to stay in the classroom.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Develop a pathway option that balances years of service with demonstrated classroom effectiveness.

64 percent of all teachers support the idea of years of service and teacher evaluations as an additional pathway to Level Three certification.



The teachers seeking to move to Level Three licensure were overwhelmingly supportive of combining years of service with classroom effectiveness. Our findings indicate that 80 percent of Level Two teachers either strongly or are somewhat in support of this proposal. According to one New Mexico teacher: *“I support this advancement idea, because I know several educators who have been ‘highly effective’ for several years, are part of school leadership, take advantage of voluntary professional development, but are not in a position to pursue a graduate degree”*⁶

Creating additional pathways would provide more opportunities for effective teachers to advance. According to a public records request from the New Mexico Public Education Department, currently 32 percent of Level Two teachers are “highly effective” or “exemplary,” and despite their high rating and possible high number of years’ experience, are unable to advance in licensure level.⁷

RECOMMENDED PATHWAYS:

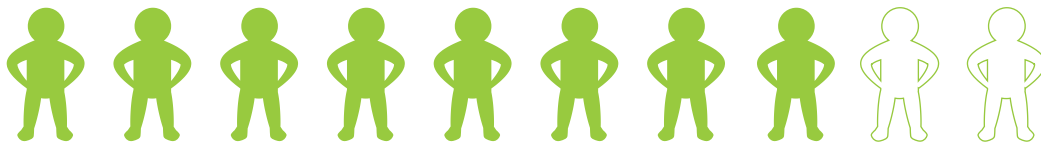
- + A teacher who has at least three out of the four most recent overall evaluation ratings as “highly effective” or “exemplary” and at least five years experience as a Level Two teacher would advance to Level Three.
- + OR a teacher who has at least three out of the four most recent overall evaluation ratings as “effective” or higher and be rated as “highly effective” or “exemplary” in domains two

and three (observation component) of the evaluation and at least five years experience as a Level Two teacher would advance to Level Three.

Adding additional pathways would increase teacher compensation for some teachers and provide the possibility of increasing incentives for teachers to stay in the classroom longer. The recommended pathways would allow teachers to attain higher pay, thus increasing the likelihood of retaining these

teachers longer and in return increase student performance. We recommend that implementation begin immediately as years of service are tracked by districts and the teacher evaluation system is utilized statewide.

80 percent of Level Two teachers support the idea of years of service and teacher evaluations as an additional pathway to Level Three certification.



RECOMMENDATION 3: Create an additional licensure level as an opportunity for advancement for the most effective Level Three teachers.

New Mexico teachers can advance to a Level Three licensure in as little as six years; however there is no other opportunity for further advancement, unless they choose to become administrators. According to the New Mexico Public Education Department, currently 41 percent of Level Three teachers are “highly effective” or “exemplary,” but have no opportunity for advancement or higher compensation beyond a Level Three licensure.⁸ Developing a fourth level for top-performing Level Three teachers in combination with years of experience would

give effective teachers an opportunity for advancement without leaving the classroom. One New Mexico teacher shared: *“The problem with the system right now is that once a teacher obtains Level Three, there is nowhere else for them to go except an administrative degree. Not all teachers want to go into administration so it would be nice if they had other options.”*⁹ Our experience and interaction with colleagues leads us to believe that adding a fourth licensure level would improve the retention of effective teachers.

POSSIBLE REQUIREMENTS:

- + A teacher has at least three out of the four most recent overall evaluation ratings as “highly effective” or “exemplary,” at least five years as a Level Three teacher, has a master’s degree, or is a National Board Certified teacher would advance to a Level Four.

SALARY PROPOSAL:

- + Teachers advancing from a Level Three license to a Level Four license could be compensated by a salary increase that is equivalent to that of an assistant principal in the building where they teach.

This recommendation, if implemented, would allow effective educators to advance in their career without having to leave the classroom and seek administrative positions. Teachers would have the opportunity to earn pay similar to that of some administrators, but could continue to work directly with students. Level Four teachers could have the option to provide instruction to students for half part of their work day and work in various roles to

directly support other teachers the other half of the day. These teachers could additionally serve as mentors to new teachers or teachers in need of additional supports. Level Four teachers could serve as leaders within their buildings and districts, sharing best practices, participating in curriculum and/or assessment development, and leading professional development of their peers.

+++++ CONCLUSION +++++

In order to increase the likelihood of retaining highly effective educators in New Mexico, changes could be considered to the licensure system. Educators in New Mexico have voiced approval for additional pathways to Level Three licensure that incorporate experience and effectiveness ratings and an option for a Level Four license.

+++++++ APPENDIX A ++++++

NEW MEXICO'S CURRENT LICENSURE SYSTEM

New Mexico teachers currently work under a three-tiered licensure system that is tied to teacher salaries. Current requirements limit the level that teachers can attain, despite their level of effectiveness in the classroom. A highly-effective, experienced teacher who does not become credentialed for Level 3 is most likely earning a \$1 per year raise. Without obtaining a master's degree or becoming National Board Certified, this teacher is limited to a Level 2 license. If credentialed, the existing licensure system also allows for this teacher to become Level 3 certified in as little as six years. However, there is no opportunity for advancement beyond this point, unless the teacher chooses to leave the classroom and become an administrator. Current licensure levels have minimum salary rates as follows: \$34,000 for Level 1, \$42,000 for Level 2, and \$52,000 for Level 3. Under the current New Mexico licensure system:

- + Teachers begin at a Level 1 licensure and can teach at this level for up to 5 years. Teachers are required to submit and pass a dossier, which will advance teachers to a Level 2 license.¹⁰
- + Teachers can remain at a Level 2 license for the remainder of their teaching career¹¹
- + Teachers must have either a master's degree, along with other requirements to advance to a Level 3 license.¹²
- + Despite education, years of service, or effectiveness, the highest level a teacher can attain is a Level 3 license.
- + According to the New Mexico Public Education Department, currently 32 percent of Level 2 teachers are "highly effective" or "exemplary," and despite their high rating and possible high number of years' experience, are unable to advance in licensure level.
- + According to the New Mexico Public Education Department, currently 41 percent of Level 3 teachers are "highly effective" or "exemplary," but have no opportunity for advancement or higher compensation beyond a Level 3 licensure.¹³
- + Districts across the state offer teachers a \$1 raise after each school year, when there is no change to their licensure level. *Examples of salary schedules are included in separate Appendix B.*

+++++++ APPENDIX B ++++++

Information regarding the correlation between licensure level, years of experience and degrees conferred can be found below for two example districts in New Mexico:

Example 1: Farmington Public Schools. Information may be accessed at:
http://district.fms.k12.nm.us/Departments/Human_Resources/Salary

Example 2: Albuquerque Public Schools. Information may be accessed at:
<http://www.aps.edu/human-resources/salary-schedules>

+++++ ENDNOTES +++++

¹ Question: "Currently, New Mexico teachers can attain Level 3 licensure by obtaining a graduate degree or National Board Certification. To what degree would you support or oppose creating an additional path to obtaining a Level 3 license?" Responses (n = 1003): "Strongly support" (60.0 percent), "Somewhat support" (14.1 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (6.0 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (7.8 percent), "Strongly oppose" (10.3 percent), "Unsure" (1.8 percent)

² Question: "To what degree would you support or oppose using a teacher's years of service combined with a minimum evaluation rating, either overall or specific domain ratings, without having to obtain a Masters degree, as an additional route to reaching Level 3 licensure?" Responses (n = 1003): "Strongly support" (47.5 percent), "Somewhat support" (16.8 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (3.8 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (12.7 percent), "Strongly oppose" (18.3 percent), "Unsure" (1.0 percent). Responses for teachers with Level 2 Licensure (n = 506): "Strongly support" (68.4 percent), "Somewhat support" (11.9 percent), "Neither support nor oppose" (2.6 percent), "Somewhat oppose" (7.9 percent), "Strongly oppose" (9.1 percent), "Unsure" (0.2 percent).

³ For VAS Score information: New Mexico Educator Effectiveness System, 27 §§ Technical Guide: Business Rules and Regulation-Improved Student Achievement: STAMs (Student Achievement Measures) -Step 4b: Converting Overall VAS Into Percentile and STAM Points (NMTeach, 2017). Retrieved from: <http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/NMTeachDocs/2017/NMTEACH%20Technical%20Guide%202016-2017.pdf>

⁴ Chingos, M. M., & Peterson, P. (2014, June 5). Who Profits from the Master's Degree Pay Bump for Teachers? (Rep.). Retrieved 2017, from Brookings website: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/who-profits-from-the-masters-degree-pay-bump-for-teachers/>

⁵ Question: If you are supportive of the idea of using a teacher's years of experience combined with their evaluation rating to be used as an additional route to Level 3 licensure without having to obtain a Master's degree, what do you like about this approach? If you are opposed to this idea, what do you not like about this approach? (open-ended response)

⁶ Question: If you are supportive of the idea of using a teacher's years of experience combined with their evaluation rating to be used as an additional route to Level 3 licensure without having to obtain a Master's degree, what do you like about this approach? If you are opposed to this idea, what do you not like about this approach? (open ended response)

⁷ Obtained via public record request IPRA #17-297, issued October 30, 2017 and received November 13, 2017.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Question: Do you have any additional suggestions for how the state and school districts

can increase teacher compensation, create opportunities to move up in licensure, or ways to provide more opportunities for advancement for Level Three teachers? (open-ended response)

¹⁰ New Mexico Public Education Department. Licensure Frequently Asked Questions. Pages 6 and 8. (n.d.). Retrieved 2017, from <http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/LicensureDocs/Licensure%20Frequently%20Asked%20Questions.pdf>

¹¹ New Mexico Public Education Department. Licensure Frequently Asked Questions. Pages 6-7. (n.d.). Retrieved 2017, from <http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/LicensureDocs/Licensure%20Frequently%20Asked%20Questions.pdf>

¹² New Mexico Public Education Department. Licensure Frequently Asked Questions. Page 4. (n.d.). Retrieved 2017, from <http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/LicensureDocs/Licensure%20Frequently%20Asked%20Questions.pdf>

¹³ Friedman, B. A., New Mexico Public Education Department, PED, Public Records, IPRA #17-297.