

Online Learning: Addressing Challenges and Seizing Opportunities

New Mexico

THE CHALLENGES

America's K–12 education system faces three significant challenges: (1) increased global demands for skilled workers, (2) significant financial shortfalls, and (3) a looming teacher shortage. Independently, these factors present significant challenges for U.S. schools. In combination, they create a national imperative for swift action to create a more innovative, effective, and efficient education system.

THE OPPORTUNITIES

Every day, creative educators are using technology better to meet the needs of students and teachers. Technology can no longer be considered an “add-on” tool in education, but rather one that is integral. Embracing online-learning opportunities for students and teachers will strengthen the supply and quality of teachers, improve efficiency, and increase students' college and career readiness.

CHALLENGE 1: GLOBAL SKILLS DEMANDS GROW FASTER THAN U.S. COLLEGE GRADUATION RATES

The global economy increasingly demands a skilled workforce. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), only 40 percent of Americans aged twenty-five to thirty-four have a two- or four-year college degree, ranking the United States tenth among industrialized nations. Boosting the supply of skilled workers and leading the world in postsecondary attainment will require greatly increasing current high school graduation rates and college completion rates (depicted below.)

High School Graduation Rate (Class of 2006) ¹		
	State-Reported	Independently Reported
New Mexico	87%	56%
United States	n/a	69%

College Completion Rates ²		
	Two-Year Institutions (Entered in 2005 and graduated within 3 years)	Four-Year Institutions (Entered in 2002 and graduated within 6 years)
New Mexico	18%	40%
United States	31%	56%

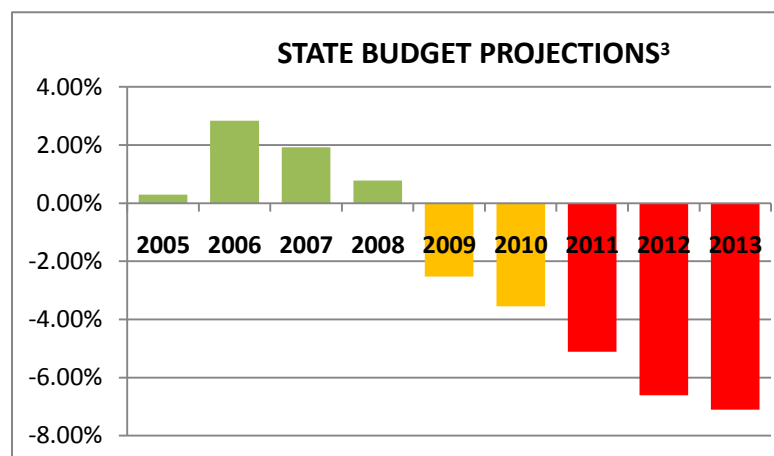
CHALLENGE 2: PROJECTED STATE DEFICITS INDICATE A PENDING FUNDING CLIFF

Local and state governments face continued declines in revenue. In many states, the 2008–09 recession has led to funding cuts or freezes for public education. Long-term forecasts predict that education funding will not return to former patterns forcing policymakers and educators to use scarce resources more effectively and efficiently to improve student outcomes.

According to the National Association of State Budget Officers, New Mexico's 2010 budget cuts totaled=

\$539 million⁴

including cuts to K–12 education.



CHALLENGE 3: THE LOOMING TEACHER SHORTAGE

Simply put, there are not enough highly skilled teachers to staff the nation's classrooms, let alone to accelerate improvements in achievement and attainment. Approximately one million teachers—almost one third of current teachers—are eligible to retire in the next five to seven years.⁵ Additionally, almost half of all new teachers leave the profession within five years of entering the classroom. The challenge is even more acute in difficult-to-staff subjects and in low-income and rural areas.

Percentage of New Mexico public school teachers aged 50 and up in School Year 2008–09 = **54%⁶**

This page summarizes information about (1) online-learning opportunities in New Mexico, (2) the presence of New Mexico state policies that support online learning, and (3) how federal policy supports online learning in New Mexico.

1. ONLINE-LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

DO NEW MEXICO'S STUDENTS AND TEACHERS HAVE ACCESS TO COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET?

	NM	U.S.
STUDENTS PER HIGH-SPEED, INTERNET-CONNECTED COMPUTER (2006) ⁷	3.1	3.7
PERCENTAGE OF EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS WITH ACCESS TO COMPUTERS IN THEIR CLASSROOMS (2007) ⁷	79%	50%
PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS WITH ACCESS TO INTERNET AT HOME (2009) ⁸	65%	83%

DO NEW MEXICO'S STUDENTS AND TEACHERS HAVE ACCESS TO ONLINE-LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES?

- **State virtual school:** New Mexico operates a state virtual school that is available to students in grades K–12. In School Year 2008–09, Innovative Digital Education and Learning in New Mexico (IDEAL-NM) had around 1,700 course enrollments. IDEAL-NM offers a statewide learning management system, providing informational training courses and a space for collaboration among educational leaders.⁹
- **Other online programs:** There are some district-run online programs in New Mexico. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of applications to charter schools with a significant online-learning component.⁹

2. STATE POLICY INFRASTRUCTURE

DOES NEW MEXICO HAVE POLICIES THAT NURTURE ONLINE LEARNING FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS?

	NM	States with Policy
STUDENT STANDARDS INCLUDE TECHNOLOGY LITERACY ⁷	Yes	50
STUDENTS ARE TESTED ON TECHNOLOGY LITERACY ⁷	No	13
COMPUTER-BASED ASSESSMENTS IS OFFERED ⁷	No	26
INITIAL TEACHER-LICENSE REQUIREMENTS INCLUDE TECHNOLOGY ⁷	Yes	21
INITIAL PRINCIPAL-LICENSE REQUIREMENTS INCLUDE TECHNOLOGY ⁷	No	10

3. FEDERAL POLICY

DOES FEDERAL POLICY SUPPORT ONLINE-LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN NEW MEXICO?

- Since Fiscal Year 2002, **New Mexico has received \$29 million** from the federal Enhancing Education Through Technology grant program to improve student outcomes through the use of technology such as improving teachers ability to use technology or improving online-learning opportunities.¹⁰

SOURCES: