

State reduces paperwork for teachers by 41%

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SANTA FE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced on Sept. 12 that the Public Education Department has completed an overhaul of reporting requirements, trimming 34% from administrative work required of school districts and charter schools across New Mexico and cutting teacher paperwork by 41%.

This fulfills an executive order issued May 23 by Lujan Grisham to reduce the administrative burden for teachers and school administrators by 25% by the start of the 2022-23 school year.

“Less time spent on paperwork means more time that educators have to spend quality time teaching our students,” Lujan Grisham said. “By easing burdens for educators and administrators, we are ensuring they have the bandwidth to do what they do best – building a solid educational foundation for future generations.”

“As a former superintendent, I know very well how much time it takes to meet the state’s data-collection needs,” Public Education Department Secretary Kurt Steinhaus, who served as superintendent in Los Alamos, said. “As education secretary, I also know we depend on districts and schools to supply essential data to guide our work. We have now struck the correct balance and right-sized our reporting requirements.”

The estimated 3,500 hours saved per year will allow each district or charter school to redirect the hourly equivalent of 1.7 full-time employees to more useful activities. At an average annual estimated salary of \$80,000 for administrators and teachers, this initiative allows a reallocation of \$136,000 per school district or state charter school from administrative work to time spent helping students and supporting school staff. The 34% burden reduction will be made this school year through four strategies:

- Reduce duplicative data collection
- Streamline processes
- Improve data systems
- Sustain improvements through the establishment of a Data Governance Council that will oversee strategy implementation

Educators will see an immediate reduction in their administrative burden with lighter loads in paperwork and caseloads, and professional development plan paperwork.

For example, educators will now face fewer steps and far less burdensome paperwork to initiate Student Assistance Teams, which are established to provide individualized support for students. With fewer obstacles to beginning the Student Assistance Team process, additional opportunities for support will be available, empowering school staff to provide more resources

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“School districts and staff have been requesting a reduction in administrative burdens for a long time,” Rio Rancho Public Schools Superintendent Sue Cleveland said. “PED’s recommendations for state-level data collection and process improvement will help ensure administrators have more time to visit classrooms and teachers have more instructional time to work directly with students.”

“As a recent classroom teacher, I know firsthand the amount of time spent on reporting and data collection. The truth is that every hour spent on duplicative or unnecessary reporting was an hour not spent with my students, engaging them in the learning process. Under the leadership of Gov. Lujan Grisham and Secretary Steinhaus, PED has transitioned to a servicing model for our educators, and today’s report is further proof of their commitment to our profession by returning 10 hours of potential instructional time per teacher through reductions in reporting in the 22-23 School Year alone,” Whitney Holland, New Mexico American Federation of Teachers President said.

“While 89% of our reporting requirements are mandated by federal law and state statute, there are actions within our control that can reduce administrative burden on schools,” Steinhaus said. “Our goal is to ensure that we make the collection of required data as easy and useful as possible.”

“Today’s announcement that the governor and the secretary have made headway to reduce the stress caused by excessive paperwork goes a long way in making teachers feel valued. These improvements will make an impact right away,” Charles Bowyer, Interim Executive Director of the National Education Association for New Mexico, said.

School administrators will see burden reduction in streamlined financial reporting, a consolidation of federal grant application requirements, and in a reduction of the amount of data collected (per legislative mandate) four times a year through STARS, the department’s data-collection system.

